THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

GEOFFREY WARDLE STAFFORD

Stafford

Sermon on the mount

DISCARD

To George
December 25, 1927
From Ben and Jessie.

Geoffrey W. Stafford.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

The Charter of Christianity

By
GEOFFREY WARDLE STAFFORD

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TO

MY FATHER

JOHN THOMAS WARDLE STAFFORD

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FORMERLY PRESIDENT OF THE WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND AND PASTOR OF THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH, TORONTO, CANADA

AND

MY FATHER-IN-LAW

JOHN WILLIAM HAMILTON

D.D., LL.D.

ONE OF THE BISHOPS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

WHO HAVE GIVEN ME OF THEIR BEST

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

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A FOREWORD

By

The President of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this volume of sermons by the Rev. Geoffrey W. Stafford, M.A. His grandfather, of blessed memory, was one of my first pastors and among my father's dearest friends. His father, Dr. J. T. Wardle Stafford, a life-long friend of my own, was president of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of Great Britain and Ireland.

This volume, which is the first-fruits of his pen, gives ample proof that Mr. Geoffrey Stafford maintains the best traditions of a family with which preaching has long been a sacred passion. It is a scholarly study of the Sermon on the Mount which places the immortal utterance of our Lord in the context of our own time and interprets its message of ethical and spiritual authority with due regard to its original backgrounds.

If we are to regain our poise and power as believers, we must discover our sources in the Christ of God, whose voice is obtaining a larger

hearing to-day, albeit slowly, in the councils of men and nations. This volume persuasively directs attention to the need for that hearing and simplicity yet sublimity of our Lord's religion and ethics. It therefore merits and will repay thoughtful and interested reading.

S. PARKES CADMAN.

PREFACE

THIS volume of sermons is published in response to the appeal of many friends. The discourses were delivered on successive Sunday mornings during the course of my pastorate and form a series. I am indebted to the scholars and expositors who have written on the included subjects. In all cases where it has been possible to recall the obligation I have acknowledged it. Doctor Morrison's *Commentary on Matthew,* and Doctor Plummer's work on the same Gospel I have found especially helpful. I am also beholden to other writers and publishers, to whom due acknowledgment is made. But I cannot omit to mention gratefully the name of Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, who has spared the time amid his multifarious activities to read the manuscripts; of the Rev. Dr. W. E. Orchard, Minister of the King's Weigh House Church, London, under the power of whose ministry I began to tread the "path of life"; of Mr. John F. Stenning, M.A., the lecturer in Hebrew at Wadham College, and Senior Proctor in the University of Oxford, to whose guidance my

quickened interest in biblical study is largely due; and last but not least to the men whom I was permitted to lead during the World War and who finely illustrated many of the truths which are here expounded.

GEOFFREY WARDLE STAFFORD.

Rockford, Illinois.

Hoping to find a confirmation of this belief, Nekhludof began to read the Gospels from the beginning. After reading the Sermon on the Mount, which always touched him deeply, he saw to-day for the first time not only those beautiful abstract thoughts which mostly demand exaggerated and impossible things, but clear, simple, and practical commandments, which, if obeyed, would speedily establish a new order of things in the social life of humanity. Obedience to these commands is entirely possible, and would speedily exclude not only all the violence which so revolted Nekhludof, but would also establish the kingdom of God upon earth, which is the greatest blessing man can hope to attain.

—Tolstoy: *Resurrection.*[1]

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CHRIST'S METHOD IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

"And seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came unto him; and he opened his mouth, and taught them."—*Matthew 5. 1, 2.*

LIKE most of these chapters, the fifth of Saint Matthew must be related to that which precedes it. The concluding words of the fourth read: "And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judæa, and from beyond Jordan." The multitudes that followed him were drawn, as multitudes would be drawn to-day, by his miracles of healing which had become the topic of national discussion. The people will always flock in crowds to any man who will heal their diseases. That is one explanation of the ascendency of Christian Science in our day. The science that can tell me how to get rid of my infirmities is the science that is sure to attract me. I am not undertaking even a passing examination of Christian Science; all I contend for is that a healing cult is sure to command the attention of the nation, and the physician is at once the man of all men most favored and

most feared. It was to this curious crowd that our Lord addressed at least some parts of his Sermon on the Mount. It is quite clear that he regarded his teaching as being of paramount importance. Christ always speaks of his words as being of greater significance than his works. "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me"—that is the prime instruction; then follows that which is secondary: it is the inferior alternative—"or else believe me for the very works' sake."

There is no clear account as to the period of the ministry of Jesus when he made this great deliverance. Matthew and Luke give us reports of a sermon which, though in some respects divergent, are yet in others almost identical. The scholars are not agreed as to whether these two evangelists are giving their reports of the same or of different discourses. No doubt the sermon would be reported from memory, and probably after the lapse of some time. Then it would have to be translated from Aramaic into Greek. Altogether, the reasons for divergencies are not far to seek. The accounts of the sermon as given us by the two evangelists are not to be wondered at. Set two people down to write some account of this or any other sermon, and they will probably soon get to the end of their tether! It is generally thought by the authorities on New

Testament literature that the Sermon on the Mount is a compilation and that Jesus could not have given so large an instruction at one and the same time. These are, however, subordinate questions. Whatever method was employed in recording this great discourse is of small matter. We have it before us—an instruction of Christ—and it will last until the end of the ages.

"He went up into a mountain." The mountain is not mentioned. Probably it was high ground near the lake, "one of the terraces on the hills," suitable for giving the instruction. He sat down—here again we have the attitude of instruction; and the instruction-idea comports with the spirit and contents of the Beatitudes. It would appear that these words were spoken specially to the inner circle. The multitudes might listen—none are excluded however special the sermon may be—but the Beatitudes were obviously spoken to those who were close to him, and who had already learned of him. I think, however, there is good reason for assuming that the sermon here recorded was delivered at different times.

For, if you will carefully read it, you will agree with me that all classes of hearers are included—that some words were spoken to the apostles, some to the disciples, and some to the great constituency which he calls "the multi-

tudes." "When he was set down." This is the posture appropriate to instruction. It is unsuitable to declamatory discourse. "Sitting" is unsuitable to oratory: the speaker must stand; so, though sitting was the usual attitude, it would have been out of harmony with the haranguing of the multitude.

No doubt he sat on one of the natural hillocks just above the lake. Scribes and Pharisees had chairs provided for them, but there was no provision for the Divine Teacher save that which was furnished by the mountainside. It was on a mountain that the law was given; and it was from a mountain that the gospel was proclaimed. Yet here the parallel ends. The Lord "came down" from the mountain when the law was given: the Lord went up to the mountain and sat upon the hillcrest which was his own creation, when the good news of the kingdom was published to the world. *Then* he spoke in the thunder and lightning: *here* he spoke in the "still small voice." *Then* the people were bidden not to approach; *now* they are invited to draw near.

The object of the Sermon on the Mount has been obscured by two classes of critics. There are people to-day who say: "Give us the Sermon on the Mount for our religion. If a man acts up to the level of that sermon, he cannot get far wrong." And so they have spoken of this ser-

mon as though it were the Alpha and Omega of all religion. But, really, *they* are wrong. Teaching was not the chief end of the life which Jesus lived among men. He came to deliver the world from the thraldom of sin. He was born into the world that he might die for it. That was his purpose in coming here—it was nothing more and nothing less. His teaching was important, but it was at the best only incidental. Men require to be taught, it is true; but still more they need to be redeemed and regenerated. Ignorance is to be deplored, but it is only the shadow of sin. Sin is the blackness of darkness. Knowledge is important but life is essential. We are touched by Divine instruction: we are thrilled by Divine forgiveness. The Sermon on the Mount is, then, of "the things that accompany salvation," but it is not salvation itself. It is the vestibule which leads ultimately into the Holy of holies, but beyond that vestibule there is a chamber and in the chamber a cross. There are those who urge that this sermon is the all in all of religion.

But the pendulum swings to the other extreme in the case of those who contend that as an ethical guide it is imperfect and one-sided. They tell us that it has a tendency to make men introspective and unpractical, and that it does not contain the stuff out of which patriots are made or public

men are molded. They say that purity of heart and meekness and mercifulness are all very well in their way, but that proper pride, public spiritedness, and chivalry are equally important, and that they find no place among the virtues that are here enumerated. In a word, to all intents and purposes they confuse the issue and indorse the maxim that "there are religious people who are not good and good people who are not religious." All such contentions are based upon the assumption that the passive virtues which are inculcated are exclusive and that there are no others. If this were all the teaching of our Lord, it might be characterized as imperfect and ethically contracted. But his "instructions" are not confined to the Sermon on the Mount. They are to be found elsewhere. What he does here, at any rate in large part, is to stress the importance of the inner spirit as the regulating principle of all our life and all our actions. What is Christianity according to the Sermon on the Mount? It is not an institution but an inspiration, not a form but a spirit.

This, then, is the value of the sermon; it is a counterblast to a mere ceremony. According to this discourse, Christianity is a quality, a mode, a temper. Ritual is serviceable only as it enshrines religion, forms and formulæ only as they are suggestive of the inner fire. Christianity is

a spirit—that is the primary lesson of the Sermon on the Mount. But let us examine our terms. What is spirit? It is in embryo in man what it is in fullness in God. God is a Spirit, and whatever of spirit there is in us is derived from him. The essential in God accentuates the essential in us. It tells us at once that the important element in man is his spirit. It bids us look away from the things that are seen to the things that are not seen. God is not wood, not stone; he is spirit. Man is not money, not machinery; he is spirit. Our great endowments are invisible. So Christianity is not in its essence ceremonial; it is spiritual. Do not let me be misunderstood. I am not opposed to ceremony: ceremony may be a great vehicle of spiritual influences. There is nothing divine in a slovenly, slipshod, ill-ordered service. We must offer the best to God both in service and in sacrifice. But the ceremony must be the outward symbol of the invisible realities of the spirit. "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." They may worship to the accompaniment of stately chant and echoing anthem if they please: but they must worship "in spirit and in truth."

The Bible is not a mechanical piece of literature. It is not a puzzle in which the various parts fit into one another. It is not even a history of

God's people merely; it is more. It is a spirit. The invisible part of the Bible is greater than that which is visible. The mind of the Master is greater than the method of the Master. The Bible is spirit: this is the outer shell: the real book is not seen. The voice with which it speaks is authoritative, but inaudible. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."

Since, then, Christianity is a spirit, it must in its very nature be an energy, an agency. It is diffusive. Get the spirit right and everything is influenced. You need not accuse the true Christian of being other-worldly. He is nothing of the kind. He is a citizen of both worlds. You need not say that the Sermon on the Mount gives no direction to us in our relation to the city and the State. It renews the spirit of man; and that spirit renewed, casts its illuminating glow over every arena and activity of life. Regulate the spirit and the affairs of Cæsar will regulate themselves. Purge the heart of man and you will purify his politics. When grace commands your heart it will cleanse your actions.

How shall we describe the method of Christ's Sermon on the Mount?

1. It Was a Popular Method

"And seeing the multitudes he went up into a mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came

unto him; and he opened his mouth, and taught them." As you read this sermon you are impressed with its cosmopolitan character. There is something in it for everybody. It would seem as if the disciples formed the inner circle of his hearers and the multitude the outer circle. Much of the discourse was addressed immediately to the inner circle; but it went beyond them, and its precepts were applicable to the multitude that stood on the outer fringe. Oftentimes the people for whom the sermon is not specifically intended are quite as much advantaged as those for whom it is. Sermons to children have been known to issue in the conversion of their parents. In like manner words to the disciples have penetrated to the outer circle and have wrought unto the salvation of the multitude.

The disciples would do well to allow no jot or tittle of this discourse to elude them. But its precepts go beyond them and strike a national note. The Christian law concerning unprovoked anger, concerning reconciliation, concerning social sins and obligations, concerning oaths and concerning reciprocal revenge—these are laws that the multitude would do well to observe, and the multitude of to-day as well as that of yesterday.

In the Sermon on the Mount Christ preached the gospel to the multitude; not all that the

multitude needed to hear, but enough to change the face of society if only its injunctions were obeyed.

It is not too much to say that the disciples heard for the multitude as well as for themselves. For the disciples were but the inner circle, the majority were the outer circle; but each circle had the same center—the need of a Redeemer. They were not of different orders; they belonged to one another; they had a common denominator, and that was humanity. The multitudes heard the word in Christ's day. "The common people heard him gladly." Do they hear him to-day? Is not the inner circle smaller than ever? Have not many of the disciples become the outer circle, and is not the multitude in danger of falling back beyond the range of the preacher's voice? Somebody remarked a while ago, "Christianity is not in possession now." He meant, I suppose, that it no longer dominates the nation. Well, it is up to us to restore it to its true position. When the disciples are close to the Master, the crowd will draw nearer too. Inner circles create outer circles. If a score of you congregated in some main thoroughfare, people would rush from every quarter of the street to discover for themselves the reason of it all. Christ held the crowd by his preaching. The Archbishop of Canterbury has been telling some straight truths to his assembled

clergy. He says that the secret of the empty and the emptying church is ineffective preaching. I believe that he has hit the nail on the head. No doubt it is harder for the best of preachers than ever before. The audience, more than you think, gives point and power to the sermon; and you detract from its efficiency if you are not there to hear it. But if the audience makes the orator, the orator has some share in making the audience; and it behooves us preachers to do our best so that we may be freed, as far as is possible, from the condemnation of self-reproach. Still, it is indisputable that preaching has deteriorated. Doctor Burroughs, the Bishop of Ripon, England, pillories a preacher in one of his books, concerning whom a midshipman wrote to him, "We had another futile sermon from our padre this morning, the sort that begins, 'This is the day when the church teaches us to remember so-and-so.'" Now, preaching is essential to public interest and has always been the instrument which God has honored in genuine revivals of religion. The multitudes will be reached first of all by intelligent, up-to-date preaching. Other endowments count—earnestness, heroism, self-sacrifice. But preaching is the great bell which calls the people to church. Lecky says that it was the evangelical revival that saved England from a revolution, and Calvin Coolidge, President of the United States,

in one of his recent speeches, similarly diagnosed the situation:

"No doubt the most powerful influence which was working to establish the new order was the revival of religion. The movement had been started in England by John Wesley and George Whitefield in 1729. It was distinctly an effort to reach the common people. They went down among those who were not otherwise reached preaching the gospel. In America Jonathan Edwards led two revival movements, culminating in 1742. Whitefield came to this country and preached to great congregations during this period, and the followers of Wesley sent Bishop Asbury here in 1771. These religious activities were distinctly popular movements. They rested on the theory that every human soul was precious. They resulted in a leveling process; but it was not a leveling down, it was a leveling up. They raised every person that came under their influence to a higher conception of life. A new recognition of the spiritual worth gave to all humanity an increased importance." It was the evangelical revival that saved England from revolution: and another revival is due, if the forces that threaten the destruction of civilization are to be arrested.

The Sermon on the Mount reached the multitude, and our sermons must reach them likewise if the world is to be brought to God.

2. It Was a Discriminating Method

Read the sermon and you will find that there is something in it for everybody: and for most of us there is a great deal. If I speak for myself, it hits me in nearly every verse. It comes to me in my need; it comes to me in my sorrow; it comes to me in my sin. I cannot escape it because I feel it is for me. "His disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them."

Now, God is always speaking to us. Are we waiting for the revelation he has to make? Christ's sermons are ever ringing in our ears. Are we ready to appropriate them and make them all our own? Are we ready to receive the rough as well as the smooth exhortations, the bitter alongside of the sweet? "As many as I love I rebuke," says he to whom all souls belong. He knows when rebukes are needed. And does he love us less because he rebukes us? Christ has a word here for hypocrites—play actors—but there is no evidence that he has ceased to love them even though they still act their part. The follies and foibles and sins that are here specified not merely cover every case but every kind of case. None of the disciples need all these exhortations: every disciple needs some. We will not listen for one another. If we listen for ourselves we shall have enough to do. There is a word for

every one of us, and we do well to heed it if we would make our calling and election sure.

3. It Was an Instructive Method

"He opened his mouth and taught them." In other words he gave them oral instruction, and it is this element of instruction in the Sermon on the Mount which has given its permanence. It has lasted through the centuries, and it lives to-day because its teaching is divine.

There is no ministry so permanent as a teaching ministry. *This* is the textbook of the ages. If the preacher is not well equipped to expound it, how can he proclaim its great and glorious message? We are ordained to this end, as Christ was ordained to it. We may be well equipped in the realms of literature, science, and art. All these are good if they help us to a better understanding of the Word; but the Word itself is the supreme concern of the preacher. All related subjects are but jets of light which should be concentrated on the Book itself. For this book has a permanent value for to-day, and still is "a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path."

It is doubtful if the knowledge of this volume possessed by the present generation is equal to that of the generations past. This is true, I believe, not only in the world but also in the church: and it would appear that much of the ineffective-

ness of the modern pulpit is due to our fundamental ignorance of the eternal verities enshrined in this book. Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, in his able volume *Ambassadors of God,* has uttered sober truth when he says, "A preacher may have popular gifts and qualities, but he is a weaponless warrior in the thick of the battle unless armed with the sword of the Spirit."[1] The ignorance of the shepherd is reflected in the ignorance of the flock; and this applies not only to the church but also to the world. In most of our day schools on either side of the Atlantic the Bible is either not studied at all or is dealt with in a perfunctory manner. The abolition of the study of God's Book bodes ill for the future of the world. Its voice of warning and encouragement was never more needed than now. Its ethics is still the inspiration of all that is best in human life and conduct. It still authenticates its message to every ear which God has opened. He who taught as one having authority still teaches us through the Sermon on the Mount, and through those wondrous truths which are to be found in these Gospels—truths which still shine like stars through the dark corridors of time. His words, which are none other than the words of God, are life to the living and light to the dying; and to-day

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he has a message for this and every generation: a message of peace and good will, a message of forgiveness to all who turn to him with full purpose of heart.

THE MENDICANTS OF THE KINGDOM

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."—*Matthew 5. 3.*

THE Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes. These form the attractive vestibule into that great Temple of Truth. "Blessed" is the word which stands over the portal. And the "blessedness" which is here indicated has no reference to the inner state or feeling which is experienced by the several classes that are named: it is the estimate of these classes which is entertained by God.

As to the number of the Beatitudes opinions vary. Some commentators restrict it to seven—the sacred number. Some say that there are eight—the symbol of completeness. Some say that there are nine—three triplets; and others yet again that there are ten—the same number as the Decalogue. Much depends on how we interpret the scope of a beatitude. All are agreed upon seven—the beatitudes contained in verses 3 to 9. After that there is variety of judgment. In Luke's Gospel there are four beatitudes and four woes: a circumstance which has led many to stress the parallelism, and to say that there are

eight beatitudes in Matthew's version. Moulton, in *The Modern Reader's Bible,* speaks of these verses as treating of a single beatitude with a sevenfold expansion. The significance of "poor in spirit" must be looked for in the seven applications into which it is expanded. That is, according to this interpretation there are eight beatitudes in all, which do not describe eight different classes of people, but eight different elements of excellence which may be combined in one individual, who may acquire them in any order, or, indeed, all of them simultaneously.

On the very threshold of the subject I am impressed with the note of authority which our Lord strikes in his ministry. That note is altogether unique and it has no parallel in the case of any other public teacher. He takes a line which no other national leader has ever dared to take. In the United States we use the word "policy" as the equivalent of "diplomacy." Well, a diplomatist would have adopted a course quite the reverse of this. He would have flattered the patriotic vanity of his hearers by reminding them that they were the children of Abraham, that they were born into a splendid inheritance and that they were the most privileged people on the face of the earth. If he had said, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor," he would have pleased them by placing them among the patrons; but "Blessed

are the poor" fell like a bombshell on their ears. For this is what Jesus undoubtedly said, "Blessed are the poor," and so Saint Luke has rendered it. He spoke in Aramaic: the Aramaic equivalent meant more than poverty in this world's goods; and the Greek translator no doubt felt that he was justified in adding the words "in spirit" as also covering character.

Christ was not only unconventional: he was courageous when he announced this as his first principle or passport into the Kingdom: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." At the first blush such a maxim would surely militate against success. For the people were looking for a kingdom of impressive pomp and pageantry—a kingdom more divine than David's, more splendid than Solomon's, more comprhensive than Cæsar's. I have no doubt that the disciples who heard these words were shocked beyond measure. To every Jew the advent of the Messiah was a spectacle. No Jew, not even the best of the disciples, could wean himself from that entrancing vision: and for Him in whom their hopes were centered to announce such a program was the heaviest blow they could receive. "Can this be the Messiah who speaks?" we can imagine them asking in tones of pained astonishment. "If this is the kingdom that is at hand, there is no need to herald it! Is this,

indeed, he who must sit on the throne of David, of whose kingdom there should be no end?"

"Blessed are the poor" is the Aramaic rendering of the text. We believe that Matthew is the true interpreter of the mind of the Master. Bare poverty is not of necessity a virtue. I have known men rich in earthly goods but poor in spirit. Prosperity in the things of this life is not a crime. Men of vast possessions may be good and gentle and Christlike. Poverty of spirit is not inconsistent with material wealth. Of course men do require to know something of the poverty of the text if they are to use wealth wisely and well. A man must be a Christian of a very fine type if he is not to suffer from the corrosion of money. For wealth has special perils; it tends to pride, to selfishness, to self-sufficiency. If money becomes the master, it will ere long become the tyrant. Keep it in its right place; consecrate it to the service of God and humanity, and you cannot get far astray. Possess your wealth: do not let it possess you; then you shall be rich indeed. But no man is safe with worldly riches unless he is poor in spirit. The perils of prosperity can be avoided only by the man who has committed himself body, soul, and spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ. We must all remember that we belong to one another. The poor must live for the rich and the rich must live for the poor: then the rich

will avoid arrogance and the poor will avoid envy. Poverty of spirit is the common denominator of the saints, and it makes us all one.

What is it to be "poor in spirit"? The answer to this question will occupy our time in this service. Well, to begin with it is not to be *poor-spirited.* To be poor-spirited is to be of the opposite temper to that described in the text. To be poor-spirited is to be lacking in moral energy, to have no keen sense of right or wrong, to lie in ambush in the day of battle, and to have no care whether the cause of God flourishes or fades, so long as we are left alone. The poor-spirited man has no sense of honor; he lacks chivalry; his love is languid, and the curse of Meroz rests upon him. But he who is "poor in spirit" is the first in the field when any moral issue is at stake. He is a king among the men of courage; he is an influence for righteousness wherever he goes. The poor-spirited man is a negative quantity: the poor in spirit is a positive. The "poor in spirit" are the most spiritual in the universe. It is the "poor in spirit" that carry great causes, that shoulder heavy responsibilities, and are filled to overflowing with the enthusiasm of God. "The man who is poor in spirit is the man who has seen God, and under the influence of that constraining vision he goes forth as God's ambassador to proclaim his glad tidings and to estab-

lish his kingdom amongst men. To be poor in spirit is to be emptied of self and to be filled with God. It is to put God first in everything: it is to exclaim with the psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' "

1. There Is an Evangelical Sense in Which the Poor in Spirit Are Blessed

Are there not times when we need to get back to the first principles of our faith, and to examine them once again, or, rather, to examine ourselves in the light of them? These words were spoken immediately to the disciples, but remotely they apply to us—that is, remotely as to time but immediately as to need. The disciples were learners of Christ, but they had to begin, as you and I have to begin, with the alphabet of grace. They had to divest themselves of their self-righteousness, to unload themselves of all earthly prizes which they had won during their pilgrimage before they became pupils in the school of the Master. They had to disclaim themselves before they could become his disciples, to empty themselves before they could be filled with all the fullness of God.

Much has been written in these latter days con-

cerning sin: and all sorts of theories have been promulgated. There is a literature in current circulation which seeks to show that the sinner may be his own saviour. We have shifted the emphasis and put it in the wrong place. Sin must be related first of all to God—"Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Listen to this extract from *Old Chester Tales*. "You have sinned and suffered for your sin. You have asked your heavenly Father to forgive you, and he has forgiven you. But still you suffer. The worst trouble in the world is the trouble that does not know God and so does not suffer. Without such knowledge there is no suffering. The sense of sin in the world is the apprehension of Almighty God." It is contact with God, then, that gives us the sense of sin. It is the brooding of his Spirit over the human heart which enables us to see ourselves in our true light. The psychology of the soul is set forth by the Immortal Dreamer as by no other writer outside the inspired Book. One of the earliest pictures which we remember—for I take it the most of us read John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* when we were boys and girls—is that of Christian with a burden on his back. "What shall I do?" he asks with trembling accents; and in so speaking he asks the question of the ages. "What shall I do?" The Dreamer himself makes the impor-

tance of this burden very clear. "I saw a man," he says, "with a great burden on his back." "I am in myself undone," exclaims the Pilgrim, "by reason of a burden that lieth hard upon me." What is this burden? Not merely sin, but the sense of sin. In other words, we are conscious not merely of wrongdoing, but of a tendency toward wrongdoing. There is a list, a bias in our nature that is away from God; and the sooner we admit it the better for us all. It is the sense of sin and the consciousness of the need of the redeeming love of God that set our feet in the way of salvation and qualify us to receive the beatitude of the text, "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—the sinner who knows himself such, but whom Christ has healed of his self-despisings; the leper who is conscious of his leprosy, but who looks wistfully to the All-Healer to impart the cleansing touch. "Blessed are the poor in spirit"—the penitent, the prostrate at the feet of Jesus, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

This is putting first things first. I am sure that in so speaking I have described many who are here. We know that we have "*fallen* short of the glory of God." If we do not, we are not even facing the kingdom. If we feel that we are meritorious, then we are without merit. If we say, "I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing," we are of all men the most

miserable. But we know ourselves better than that. We know that we have "erred and strayed —like lost sheep"; and that knowledge if we use it well will issue in salvation, for in proportion as we go down into the valley of humiliation shall we go up into the clear light of acceptance with God; and in proportion as our Lord shall say concerning us, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," in that proportion shall we and all his disciples unite with him in acclaiming the shining heights of conquest—"for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

2. There Is an Ethical Sense in Which the Poor in Spirit Are Blessed

The "poor in spirit," the lowly-minded, the altruistic, get the most out of this life. They see the excellence that abounds on every side of them. A saying that deserves to be written in gold was published a while ago by "The Wayside Pulpit": "He who rejoices in the success of another shares it." How true this is to life! We all participate in that which gives us pleasure even though we are only lookers on. And who are they that take pleasure in the achievements of others? Are they not the unselfish, those who look not on their own things, but on the things of others, or, to use the expression in this beatitude, "the poor in spirit"? Indeed, the best way to realize your true self is

to live in the lives of other people. You can cultivate self only by getting out of self. True greatness is always appreciative, unselfish, magnanimous, and merciful.

One of the most inexplicable friendships, to judge by the standards of the world, was that between Dwight L. Moody and Professor Henry Drummond. Drummond's fame as a scientist, traveler, man of the world, mystic, and Christian needs not to be dwelt upon here. Moody's work as an evangelist is known throughout the five continents. They were as dissimilar as two such men could well be, yet when they met they fell in love with each other. The scholar became the confidant of the man who, save in the lore of the Bible, was unlearned and ignorant. Drummond became Moody's right-hand man during his British campaigns and regarded his chief with an almost superstitious veneration. And Moody wrote concerning his disciple, "No words of mine can better describe Henry Drummond's life and character than those in which he has presented to us his booklet, *The Greatest Thing in the World.* He was one of the most lovable men I have ever known. Was it courtesy you looked for? He was the most perfect gentleman. Was it kindness? He was always preferring another. Was it humility? He was simple and not courting favor. It could be said of him as it was said of

the early apostles that 'men took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus.' "

Now, I take this illustration not merely as a proof that Moody and Drummond were of this class whom Jesus blessed but because this poverty of spirit, so conspicuous in them, was their qualification for appreciating each other. Great men are always warmly appreciative of excellence in others. If you want justice done in any department in life, you had better apply to the masters in that craft. No depreciator is ever lowly minded. Those of whom this test is true speak well of their comrades and contemporaries; or, if that is impossible, they do not speak at all. The lowly-mindedness of the great has almost passed into a proverb. True men and women are always humble and are always keenly appreciative of the gifts and graces of their fellows. In the world of athletics this is true. The kings of sport are careful to speak well of each other. Even the professional boxer will praise the prowess of his antagonist. It has become bad form to depreciate competitors in any walk of life. Our leading actors and artists, preachers and publicists are all careful to do the correct thing by those who contend with them for the pre-eminence. They praise the gifts of rivals. I say this much, because whatever may be the ethics of such people, it has come to be recognized that lowly-minded-

ness is a standard virtue, and that it is our duty, even in the ordinary walks of life, to emphasize the gifts which others have. Peacocks consumed with vanity over their own feathers cannot see other birds. But you and I are souls with the inspiring ideals of these Gospels before us. We live in another world and we seek to adjust our lives by the principles of the epoch-making sermon. We desire to measure up to the moral standard which this book contains. We desire to be lowly that we may be great, and we desire to know not our own greatness but the greatness of the men and women among whom we live and with whom we have to do.

The saints do not entirely belong to bygone days. They are not all mediæval. There are saints in your households as well as in Cæsar's. If the church does not canonize them, you should. Saints abound on every side of us if only we have the eyes to see and the hearts to understand.

3. There Is a Transcendent Sense in Which the Poor in Spirit Are Blessed

In the realm of the higher spiritual nature this is true. The more spiritual we are, the more lowly minded, the less ambitious for earth's honors and rewards, the surer of the amaranthine wreath—the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away.

"Blessed are those who feel poor in spirit" is the rendering of the verse by Doctor Moffatt.[1] Not only *are* poor but *feel* poor. Many *are* poor; but they don't realize it. But the beatitude is uttered not only for those who *are* but who *feel* poor. It spells the realization of our emptiness before God comes to fill us with the blessing. Now, the first rung on the ladder of sainthood is to feel poor in spirit. Holiness is the endowment of the humble. This historic Christian doctrine is in danger of being perverted from its original use. Holiness cannot be standardized; you cannot apply the measuring line of the theologian to determine who are holy and who are not. You can no more analyze holiness than you can analyze the fragrance of the flower. It dwells in transcendental regions and refuses to submit itself to any surgical operation. Clubs and communities and conventions have been established in order that Christian people might be instructed in the doctrine, and that they might become possessed of its priceless secret. But they have not greatly advanced the cause they are presumed to have at heart. Sometimes they have fostered spiritual pride. Good men and women have been tricked into the belief that their goodness is exceptional, and when they have been thus persuaded, the spir-

[1] *The Holy Bible: A New Translation*, by James Moffatt. Reprinted by permission of George H. Doran Company.

itual thermometer has fallen at once to zero, for purity of heart is eternally hostile to spiritual pride; and where pride enters there can be no purity. Entire sanctification is the sanctification of everything. It means that pride is crucified, and envy, anger, and self-will are all thrown into chains. The self-assertive man cannot be poor in spirit; when he becomes thus poor his self-assertion vanishes. Where can we find such a noble example of humility as in our Lord himself? Who "though he was rich, yet for" our "sakes became poor"; "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." This was indeed stooping to conquer: this was poverty of spirit which spelled enlargement and enrichment. "The very thing which he seems to forego he gains, and gains by foregoing it." It was the prophet who exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone: for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." It was Isaiah himself who was kindled to a moral passion and purity which sent him through Israel like a flame of fire and enabled him to arrest the downward tendency of a nation to which he belonged and a people whom he loved.

"Blessed are those who feel poor in spirit"; or,

as Tertullian has rendered it, "Blessed are the beggars in spirit—for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." You must be beggars if you would be blessed. You must be spiritual mendicants if you would become possessors of the everlasting treasure. Such mendicancy is a channel of mercy. Such dependence is a passport into the palace of delight. And not merely in the future but in the present! The text refers not so much to the kingdom of glory as the kingdom of grace in this world over which the Saviour rules. You shall have here and now his salvation, his protection. His mercies shall close you round every day, and his angels shall guard you every night, and all along the pathway of your pilgrimage he will guide you with his counsel, and afterward he will receive you into that presence in which there is fullness of joy and to that right hand where there are pleasures for evermore.

STRENGTH FOR THE SORROWFUL

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."—*Matthew 5. 4.*

THIS beatitude is the beatitude of a fallen race. It would be inappropriate in a state of bliss. There can be no mourners in such a state. The idea of heaven excludes unhappiness. Unfallen angels cannot mourn. This is peculiarly a benediction which belongs to God's people now and here. And I must stress the qualification—God's people. It is not true of those who belong to other orders. Not all classes of mourners are blessed. This beatitude is specially for the disciples. We do *not* know that "all things work together for good;" we *do* know that "all things work together for God *to them that love God.*" Mourning in itself is not the condition of blessing: the transformation of mourning never occurs outside the inner circle.

It is remarkable that our Lord himself should have made such a distinct pronouncement upon mourning when he himself was such a fountain of joy. He emphasized joy, and he gave it a place of due importance in his ministry. "That your joy may be full" was his message to the disciples, and the gospel of which he was the sum

and substance is "glad tidings of great joy." I think, however, that the explanation is to be found in the order in which these beatitudes occur. The beatitude of the mourners follows immediately after that of the poor in spirit. It would seem as if the inevitable consequence of evangelical poverty in spirit is mourning. Mourning is the appropriate emotion in such a case. I am aware that poverty in the ethical and transcendental regions should be the occasion of ecstasy. To know that we are truly humble before God ought to make us superlatively grateful. To know that our poverty of spirit enables us to appreciate the best in others should be the occasion in us of a great and abounding joy. But these experiences do not come first. The evangelical experience precedes them all: so we are poor in spirit because we are well acquainted with the sinfulness of our own hearts, well aware of our unworthiness before God, quite sure that in our own rights there is no standing ground for us within the sacred inclosure of the saints. That is the first emotion which poverty of spirit involves; and its consequence is mourning—primarily the evangelical mourning for sin from which all sorrow for shortcomings inevitably flows. But let me first of all make a few general remarks on mourning.

This beatitude is not pronounced over mere

melancholy. It is not a blessing which is given without a reason. There are people who make a fetish of low spirits. They encourage themselves in dark and dolorous thoughts. They are never so happy as when they are miserable. Sorrow is to them a kind of god to whom they must continually offer sacrifice: and mourning gives them a certain sort of melancholy pleasure. You know how true this is to life. Some riot in high spirits and some in low spirits, and there may be quite as much self-indulgence in mourning as there is in merriment. To the same category belongs the mourning that follows unrepented sin. Many mourn, not because they are sorry for sin, but because they are found out. It is not the offense which gives them pain, but the punishment which follows the offense. Such people are not sorry for their sin—they are sorry for themselves; and they have no place among those who have the right to claim this blessing. I could multiply examples of those who mourn to no good purpose, and who do not come within the scope of this text at all.

Now, what is the value of mourning in a world like this? Is there anything to be said for it? Because if there is nothing, we can say that it is indeed a dubious blessing. Has sorrow any advantage for these days in which we live? Well, this much at any rate—it enables us to see things

as they really are. Joy feeds the imagination, keeps us at high tension, makes us think that life is full of weddings and welcomes and deliriums of delight. And we have to learn, often by bitter experience, that life is something more than these. Joy is at the best—even Christian joy, if it be not related to other emotions—a somewhat delusive experience: sorrow is that which brings us down to the solid bedrock of reality. It enables us to see life truly, and in its proper perspective. Where are the stars at midday when the sun shines broad and bright from an unclouded sky? The stars are in the blue canopy above, but you do not see them. It is the darkness that lends its realizing light. The darkness reveals what the light conceals. Mourning is, for the disciple, the darkness in which God's comfort is felt, and the promises shine out to cheer and reassure us. But sorrow teaches us more than the importance of reality; it teaches us the lesson of our dependence. To learn that we must lean upon God is a great achievement. Crushing calamity has to be shared; we cannot carry it alone. The severest discipline that can come to any one of us is to be compelled to carry some burden of sorrow which we can invite no one to share with us. If you are bearing such a burden, or if you have ever borne it, you will not need that I should expound the situation. If you have had no such

experience, nothing that I can say will enable you to understand it. In some situations God alone can help us, and if we have not sought his strength, then we are weak indeed. But this mourning of the beatitude—what is it? or, rather, what is its meaning for you and me?

1. It Is Personal Mourning

It is vitally related to poverty of spirit. It is not merely personal mourning. There is a personal mourning which is not blessed. The mourning in which men and women indulge who have lost their fame or fortune, the mourning which follows on bereavement—all such sorrow has no necessary connection with this beatitude. There must, first of all, be mourning for sin and shortcomings, with an earnest and honest desire to amend our ways, if all other mournings are to be included within the scope of this benediction. We cannot claim this blessing unless we are able to say, each for himself, "Woe is me! for I am undone: for I am a man of unclean lips."

Now, I do not wish to press this or any other doctrine out of its true proportion. And I do feel that we should be on our guard lest the Church of God become a sepulcher and lest we should create an atmosphere which repels rather than encourages men and women to unite with us. But there is no true church which does not recog-

nize the personal unworthiness of its adherents and communicants. Even the festal banquet in which we share at the Holy Table recognizes the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the greatness of the price which God has paid for its remission. There is no ritual in respect of which we are in such perfect unity of purpose as the ritual of the altar. We stand for no pontifical ceremony, for no priestly incantations: we believe in the priesthood of the whole church, and that in this momentous rite God testifies in Christ to his exceeding love for sinners, and we to the need of that mercy of which we are reminded so often as we gather at the table. And of this I am sure: if we only realized that poverty of spirit which is spoken of in the text, and the mourning so inseparably connected therewith, we should in all our relations be better than we are. We should be less insistent on our rights, less clamorous for the consideration of our prestige and privileges, less desirous of those deferences which we think to be our due; content to be ecclesiastical and almost social castaways, if only we may be admitted into the charmed circle of those who are truly seeking to learn of Him. Evangelical humility is the sure forerunner of ethical humility. The mourning which is truly blessed is that which comes of our kneeling in lowly contrition at the foot of the cross, and of the cleansing by the

blood of the Eternal Sacrifice those stains which sin has made. This is the gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel.

When we have entered into this valley of evangelical mourning, all other experiences are influenced by it. It is like the sun which floods the whole landscape. We accept the discipline of life because we have become disciples. It is our discipleship that guarantees blessing upon all the untoward events, or those which seem untoward, in the life of every one of us. It is upon us as disciples that the blow falls: and it is because we are disciples that we seek to understand its meaning and its mystery, and to interpret our lives in the light of its discipline. For it is futile to say that all mourning is a fount of blessing; it is not. The effect of mourning is determined by the character of the mourner. Sorrow is not always an angel of light. There are people who are made worse by sorrow. Their mourning is the effluence of a hard, bitter, resentful spirit. A pastor called the other day upon a parishioner whose husband, some months ago, was incurably smitten. "I cannot forgive God for this," said the distressed woman, "and I have never been across the threshold of any church since it happened." But that is not the right spirit in which to accept such visitations. Let us make every allowance for those upon whom the sorrows of life press

heavily. I know how hard it is to understand the reason why. But the true disciple takes them to the Lord in prayer, and is quite sure that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. There are men and women who have been sweetened by sorrow; they have blessed the hand that smote them; and with lips however faltering, they have said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

If we are followers of the Lord Jesus—his disciples, however unworthy we may be—we shall see our sorrows in their true perspective. They will not be regarded as judgments, but as stepping-stones lifting us into the light and nearer to God. For rest assured that too much ease and happiness as the world counts happiness and ease is not good for the soul. But God has an end in view. That end is not the perfection of our circumstances but the perfection of our characters. So he chastens that he may bless us. He corrects us that he may ultimately crown us his kings and queens. So that Christian sorrow is the sure forerunner of joy. For the more you mourn, the more you will pray, and the more you pray the more you will enter into that peace which passeth all understanding. Evangelical mourning and the joy of God are first cousins. "The Stoic bears; the Epicurean submits; the Christian alone exults." "Sorrowful yet always rejoicing."

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

2. It Is a Sympathetic Mourning

But again I must remind you it is the sympathetic mourning of the disciple. It does not follow at all that the object of the sympathy is a disciple; but the subject must be. The sympathy which is remedial comes from the sons of God. Why? Because true sympathy seeks not merely to do men good, but to make them good. The sympathetic man is not content to tinker at the outside of the building; he seeks to enter the inside and to make it all it ought to be. The disciples always feel for each other in the day of disaster. Ours is a community which because of its very composition is bound to stand together. No true disciple ever rejoices in the misfortune or the fall of a fellow disciple. If sorrow comes to one we can do no other than share it. It is of the essence of Christian discipleship that we rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Sympathy is of the nature of our calling, and it is one of the cornerstones of the church. Isolation should have no place among us; we belong to one another. Nor must we expect perfection of each other. We must all do our best to grow in grace. But we shall not achieve in this life the ideal of perfection which

we have set before us. We must make allowance for the faults and weaknesses of our fellows. We must throw the mantle of a sacred charity over their failings and infirmities; we must remember the cares and sufferings, the experiences of hardship and of injury which have helped to make them what they are. I am speaking of the disciples now. We must help each other; we must sympathize with each other. We must do all we can to strengthen each other's hands in God. When a brother or sister in Christ is called to the experience of mourning, we must go down into the valley with such a one.

But we must mourn with those who are not disciples. We must sympathize with them in their sorrows, even the sorrows that have been brought upon them by their sins. But for divine grace we might have been as they are. We are no better essentially; what we are we owe to influences outside of ourselves—early environment, training, and Christian teaching. All these influences have combined to make us what we are. So that if we are better than others, it is not of us. And we must think of what the sinners with whom we sympathize may become. They have not arrived yet, but they will some day by God's grace. Michael Angelo seeing a block of marble —a huge, shapeless mass of stone—said to his attendant, "Bring me my tools."

"Why, master? why?" cried the man.

"Bring me my tools," repeated the master sculptor, "for there is an angel in the stone." Be patient with your erring brother; take pains over him—"there is an angel in the stone." "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

3. It Is Patriotic Mourning

The mourning of my text begins with evangelical humility, the humility which is poor in spirit, but it does not end there. It is a mourning which looks beyond itself and gathers up into its folds of grace all with whom we are associated: it sympathizes with both saints and sinners in their sorrows. But even then it has not completed its gracious ministry. Its solicitude is extended to the communities and countries to which we belong. Patriotism is a divine enduement, and the true patriot is ever a mourner. "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," exclaimed the psalmist, "let my right hand forget her cunning." And you remember the apostle Paul's patriotic outburst: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Love of country is an endearing virtue. Our hearts kindle into admiration for Moses, who amid the splendors of the Egyptian court deliberately elected the life of hardship and ignominy, "choos-

ing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God" than to be "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." There are some distinctions we purchase too dearly, and that was one of them.

But when our fatherland is full of faults—what then? When we see it going headlong to perdition, what can we do but mourn? Doctor Johnson said that patriotism was the last refuge of the scoundrel, and no doubt the term has been abused. But such patriotism is false: it is not true. True patriotism pleads, persists, wrestles, sheds tears. It was Jesus who, "when he was come near, . . . beheld the city and wept over it." He wanted to see the capital city of his own country achieve the best, be the best, and because this vision was not granted him he wept. So Paul was an ardent lover of his own country. He stood for all that was best in Jewish life. His desire was to see Israel saved. But Israel would have none of it, and ultimately Israel went under. The patriot is always concerned about the things of the Kingdom. He puts them before everything else: and when he sees that the Kingdom is in peril and that he cannot make sure of its deliverance, it pains him. What about ourselves? Where do we stand in relation to this generation? Are we nearer conquest, or are we closing down our efforts ignominiously? It is our duty to possess ourselves of the Sunday.

What are we doing to maintain that splendid institution? If we do nothing, we are sure to fail. Does not the desecration of the Sabbath go like a sword through our hearts? And what about temperance? We do well to keep our pledge—but that is not all. We are patriots and we mourn to see disease and drunkenness rife throughout the land. We must seek to bring the moral lepers of every class and kind to the healing streams in whose crystal water they may be cleansed.

We mourn with the mourning of the patriot, but our mourning is not unto despair. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Now, what is the assurance that is given us in connection with the mourning of the text? Wherein does the beatitude consist?

Both the Authorized and the Revised Versions and Doctor Weymouth's translation all use one word to express the reward—the word "comforted." Doctor Moffatt uses the word "consoled." "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted," is the generally accepted rendering. "Blessed are the mourners: they will be consoled," says Moffatt.[1] It is probable that the original expresses both these ideas—the ideas

[1] *The Holy Bible: A New Translation,* by James Moffatt. Reprinted by permission of George H. Doran Company, publishers.

of comfort and consolation. What is the difference in the meaning of these two words? Well, consolation is the passive side of comfort, and comfort is the active side of consolation. To console is to bring solace to the sufferer, to soothe him. To comfort is to strengthen him. For "comfort" is a word that has lost its true significance with the passing of the years. The coin, so long in circulation, has been spoiled of its image and superscription. "Comfort," as its derivation suggests—*cum* "with," and *fortis* "strength"—means strengthening; and we really comfort our friends when we impart to them strength to do and to endure. No doubt both meanings should be included in the interpretation of this promise. Christ's mourners will be soothed and strengthened.

First, they shall be consoled.

Christ's consolations are not of small account. He speaks to me as no one else can speak. To mourners of every class who have an ear for his voice he draws nigh. Christ is very democratic. He has no favorites. They alone are his favorites who appeal to him because they feel their need of him. To those who have no confidence in themselves and to whom the future has been spoiled of all earthly attractiveness, Christ delights to draw near. There are human consolations of course. I do not underrate the consola-

tions which are ministered by those who are dear to us. But in the supreme agonies and urgencies of life Christ alone can help us. Then we need the message of consolation. In days of deep mourning the voice of consolation does more for us than the voice of comfort. When the pain is most acute we need someone who can apply the ministration of the healing balsam. And the Great Physician is our only hope at such a time as this. "Blessed are the mourners: they will be consoled."

Secondly, not merely consolation, but comfort shall be given you. "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." They shall be *strengthened*—not merely soothed but *strengthened.* You need not be afraid. Christ is a reservoir of strength, and he will strengthen you. Out of his boundless resources he will replenish you. You will have strength to prosecute your tasks in the future. Your sorrow is not going to overwhelm you: for God has great things in store for you. A traveler once met a poor Scotch lad on the banks of Loch Katrine, that great natural reservoir, which supplies Glasgow with water. "Aren't you afraid," asked the traveler, "that the Loch will some day run dry because of the drain that Glasgow is making upon it, and that there may be a famine of water?" and the rustic youth smiled incredulously and said:

"It maks nae odds." He believed that the reservoir was equal to the demands that Glasgow could ever make, and he said, "It maks nae odds." And I say the same of the Lord Jesus whose we are and whom we serve. He can strengthen us. Giving does not impoverish him. God in Christ has plenteous re-enforcements. "God himself will wipe away the tears from our eyes" here; he will strengthen us for the tasks of the day and for the pilgrimage we have to pursue. And I will dare to take upon my own lips the very words of the Lord and Master of us all and say, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me . . . to give unto them that mourn in Zion a diadem for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness."

THE GENTLE-FOLK OF JESUS

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."—*Matthew 5. 5.*

It would be interesting, if we had time to prosecute the study, to discover how often, directly and indirectly, our Lord made reference to the Psalms. In the case before us there is a quotation from the thirty-seventh psalm. "The meek shall inherit the earth," (R. V., "land") "and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Jesus Christ was often indebted to those who had gone before him; He did not hesitate to avail himself of the stores of wisdom which the ages had accumulated. The sages and saints of other days were not ignored; their wise words were not "cast as rubbish to the void" by him. He paid tribute to their wisdom by quoting from their pages, and words which men and women were in danger of forgetting were minted afresh by him and sent out on their errands of mercy to the world in which he lived. Our Lord uttered many new and beautiful things, but he did not hesitate to repeat a truth which had been spoken by others. On his lips it became quick with renewed vitality and glowed with hidden fire.

The man who can polish up an old gem and

put it in a new setting deserves the gratitude of his friends and fellows. It is given to very few to be original. All that most of us can hope for is to be original in manner or method; we can mint afresh the old coins though we may not be able to manufacture new ones. But the world owes much to those who can put truth which is unchanging into a modern dress—in other words, the dress which inevitably changes with the changing years. The gospel does not change. The good news of salvation for sinful man is a constant quantity, but the accent of men alters with the ages, and each generation speaks with its own tongue concerning the truth as it is in Jesus. We preach the same gospel as that which our fathers proclaimed. Let us pray that we may preach it with our own accent and with fresh fire. Jesus did not always preach novelties: more often than not he proclaimed truths which others had taught before him, but he proclaimed them with a force and fervor which his hearers had never felt before; and *that* which on other lips had passed unheeded, on his became invested with a new power, so that men were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught as one having authority and not as the scribes. This old psalm had oftentimes been chanted, but he brought new music out of it as he uttered the great beatitude: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

What Is It to Be Meek?

It is impossible to avoid dwelling for a moment on the contrast between natural and spiritual meekness—the meekness which is of nature and the meekness which is of grace. The meekness which is of nature is a pale, anæmic sort of thing. If you look up the word "meek" in any ordinary dictionary, you will see how far it falls short of the "meekness" of the text, for you will not find it rise higher than such equivalents as "gentle," "kind," "patient," "forbearing"; and, in an unfavorable sense, tamely submissive, spiritless, easily cowed or imposed upon. The word "meek" has steadily deteriorated, and it no longer stands for that quality of character which Jesus Christ intended. If you call the average man "meek" to-day, he will rise up and demonstrate that he has no part or lot in the unresisting acquiescence which meekness now implies. If you call your friend a gentleman, you become his friend forever; but if you call him gentle as a man, a gentle man, he will henceforth regard you as his enemy. Why does he like to be called a gentleman, and hate to be called a gentle man? Because a gentleman means a man of gentility rather than a man of gentleness: and the man of the world would rather be thought a man of manners than a man of meekness. A gentleman

is a man polished from the outside; a gentle man is a man made meek on the inside. And the man of the world would rather appear well than be well. Probably there never was a time in the history of mankind when meekness was less esteemed than now. The influence of many modern writers is against the grace. Bernard Shaw, for instance, has blasted it with his cynicisms, for whatever virtues that brilliant writer has extolled meekness is not one of them. There is no market for it. Pushfulness is a hateful characteristic, and yet it is one which the world acclaims. Its stock stands high in the market. The self-assertive man is greatly in evidence. The acrobatic performer will draw a greater crowd than the preacher, and it is the boastful rather than the meek man who seems to inherit the earth. It is therefore time that we closely examined the grace of meekness to see whether our Lord, when he uttered this beatitude, spoke for all time, or whether the world has not outgrown it.

When Jesus exhorted his followers to meekness he exhorted them to the cultivation of a grace which was possessed of dynamic power. For meekness is never spoken of by him as the equivalent of tameness. I think Moffatt is not quite as fortunate as usual in his translation of the text—"blessed are the humble." The Greek equivalent involves more than humility. It in-

volves more than meekness as we generally understand that word. And yet "meek" is the only English word we have to answer to the Greek. Meekness as Christ used the word is not inert; it is energetic. It is not negative; it is positive. It is not passive; it is active. It has power, but it holds itself in. It has strength, but it bides its time. It can wait until the psychological moment arrives before it declares itself. It is disciplined, but it is "the motion of a hidden fire." Now, what are the characteristics of the meekness of which Christ speaks?

1. Purpose

Again we must remember that Christ is quoting from the Thirty-seventh Psalm. What are the general contents of this psalm? The theme is the prosperity of the wicked. For a season all had gone well with them. They had prospered in their way. They had brought wicked devices to pass. They had plotted against the just, they had drawn out the sword, and had bent their bow. But the psalmist exhorted the righteous not to fret themselves because of evildoers, for they would perish, and because they were enemies of the Lord they would be consumed. The exhortation to the righteous is to hold themselves in, to take the long view, and to rest assured that God would vindicate his own. They must be men of

an inflexible purpose, who keep the goal steadily before them, and with persevering and purposeful hearts they must determine that they will not deviate either to the right hand or to the left, but that, as the mariner in ancient times kept his eye on the pole star, so they will steer steadily toward goodness and God. The meek, then, are the men and women who are unshaken in their loyalty, whose love to God is so pure and persistent that it is simply inconceivable that they should ever fail. You understand now why I said that this meekness was possessed of dynamic power. There is nothing more lasting than consecrated persistency, a purposeful heart that connot be deflected from its aim, but which steadily pursues its pathway until the goal is reached and the prize is won.

Now, to take the long view is the highway to steady achievement. It is always the mark of the man who wins through. He who has a purpose in life sees more than the flowers that grow at his feet; and he who has no such purpose is usually lost in their ravishing beauty. There was a scholar of limited means on the other side of the Atlantic who of set purpose shut himself off from his friends. They could not understand the change; they said he was morose, morbid, and a poor sport: and at last one by one they fell away. In two years he emerged from his shell, and im-

mediately afterward it was announced that he had become a Doctor in Literature in one of the severest university tests of the world. He had an aim in life and he bowed his neck to the yoke until he attained it. Our Lord himself is the supreme illustration of this inflexible purpose. He was persecuted, yet he persisted. He was reviled, yet he reviled not again. He was misunderstood by those who were nearest to him, yet he did not step aside from the path which he had marked out for himself. He had hidden strength which sustained him at every turn of the journey. He had strength to hold on and to hold himself in. The greatest prize that the universe had to give was his, because he was not daunted by intermediate reverses, but steadily pressed forward to the cross, and through the cross to the conquest of the world.

2. Forbearance

The meek man stoops to conquer: and he wins by his forbearance. How patient Christ was with men! He was the supreme example of forbearance! How forbearing toward their faults! How gentle with them when they failed and fell! "Bear" and "forbear" are two words finely illustrated in the life of Jesus Christ. He bore men's sins: and he showed forbearance toward them in their sinfulness. He never gave them up. "Till

seven times?" "Yea, till seventy times seven" he forgave them. Christ bore with men not because he was dull, not because he was without discrimination. It was not the forbearance of weakness but of strength, not of moral ineptitude but of holiness. Christ was the strongest character in the history of the world; and it was because he was strong that he was able to bear the weaknesses and the woes of others. It is the sympathy of the strong that will help me in the hour of my need. The sympathy of the strong will always do more for me than the sympathy of the weak. So it takes a Christ to bear with me in my shortcomings, and to share the load from which all others shrink. He was patient to the point of crucifixion: he died for us.

What Christ was, you and I must be. We must bear with men. We must not abandon them because they have disappointed us. We must remember that by nature we are fellow sinners even as the rest. We must not leave them even to the Great Father as though we would have no share in their redemption. It is a selfish thing to refer to God the difficulties which we ought to shoulder ourselves. That was a wise saying of one of the old preachers: "Christ alone can save the world, but Christ cannot save the world alone." We are his adjutants; we are his colleagues. He uses us as channels through which his grace flows to those

less favored than ourselves. We are ordained to be his epistles; he would have us be his living epistles, illustrating and enforcing the forbearance and forgiveness that are his. Meekness, then, is an evangelistic grace—a grace to be employed as an ally of the gospel. Forbearance with the follies and the sins of others has, or ought to have, in it an evangelical significance. We forbear that we may win. We are meek in order that the meekness of this beatitude may be begotten in them. We must "strengthen the brethren" by showing them this grace. We must guide their steps in the way of peace by directing them to Him who is meek and lowly in heart. "I . . . beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

3. Humility

Although I do not think that Doctor Moffatt's translation conveys all that is intended by the Greek equivalent, yet I do think that humility is one of the graces involved in the meekness of this beatitude. But it is not the humility of weakness; it is the humility of strength. It is not the humility which cannot stand erect; it is the humility which stoops in order that it may shoulder the burden. It does not grovel; it greets the Unseen with a cheer. It does not refuse the honors with which the world would crown it; it casts them all at the feet of Christ.

But whether honors come or not, whether prizes or pains are awarded, is of no account. It carries itself alike in sunshine and in storm. Paul cared nothing for the flowery garland or for the ringing cheers of the bystanders: his eye was on the aramanthine wreath, the crown of righteousness that fadeth not away. Listen to his own description of the humiliations that befell him. "Unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." A vain man would not have handed down to posterity such a catalogue of humiliations. A man who amassed materials for the writing of a classical biography would not have inserted such details in his manuscript. They are the frank confessions of a saint to whom his Master was everything and his own fame nothing. Where did Paul learn this sweet humility? Where but at the foot of the cross? No wonder that he should say: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

Have we arrived at this point of self-abnegation? It is reached by the men and women who live near to God. But it is a delicate flower. It

has its counterfeit, and the "pride that apes humility" is a very specious sin. Humility cannot be "aped." It is of the very essence of humility that it cannot be assumed. You cannot masquerade as the "meek." Santa Teresa, speaking of humility and its sister graces, says: "These virtues have this property—to hide themselves from him who possesses them so that he never sees them in himself, nor thinks that he can ever possess a single one of them. Other men see all the virtues in him: but he so values them that he still pursues them, and seeks them as something never to be attained by such as he is. And Humility is one of them and is Queen and Empress and Sovereign over them all."

In what sense do the meek inherit the earth?

(*a*) They get the best out of life.

Our view of life is determined by the eyes through which we see it. The landscape is not really yonder—it is here, in my eye and in my heart. Ill nature gets nothing out of the world. Petulance perverts the vision. It is not the man that has the most "pull" that possesses it. It is one thing to hoard money; it is another thing to command it. Some possess their wealth; others are possessed by it. It is the man who possesses his wealth that truly enjoys it, for possession means mastery, and the master makes the subject do his bidding. So in all things. We all know

people of limited means who have limitless power of enjoyment. There are people who are afraid of leaving their houses after dark—even though they have servants—lest some adventurous thief should run away with their plate, or their gold, or their jewelry. Their possessions are on top of them. They are stifled by the splendor of their surroundings. Now, which of the two would you rather be—the man whose case I have just described, or the man who is care-free without those costly decorations and burdensome delights, who can go out in the darkest night in the winter to a gathering of his friends, to the pure pleasures and innocent delights of the social circle or to the house of prayer to unite with men and women who are like-minded with himself as they offer the evening sacrifice. It is our capacity for enjoyment that tells the tale and which makes the difference in our outlook on life. It is discontent and envy that poison the well-springs. "Isn't it grand to be living in a world like this!" exclaimed an old veteran the other day. He had entered into the secret of life. His heart was right and everything else was regulated. He knew nothing of the rivalries that wreck friendships, or of the competitions which are the curse of the world. He was serenely sure of himself because ill-feeling and doubt and distrust had no place in his heart. Such are the meek every-

where. They get the best out of life because they put the best into it. They see the good in their fellows because they measure them by their own goodness. They are happy anywhere, not because anywhere is their final goal, but because contentment with their present condition—making the best of it—is the sure qualification for achievement later on. They are attractive characters. Men and women of every school of thought, of every ideal and aspiration, rally to them because they are meek in the Christian sense, unselfish, other-worldly, and high-minded. They are trusted because they are truthful and have no end to serve save that of helping others. They get the best out of life.

(*b*) They get the best out of religion.

It is not the men and women who are strident and self-assertive that arrive. It is they who are meek like their Master that are ultimately crowned. The saints are the meek; meek in the Christian sense, with stores of courage which will conquer an army, with an invincibility of purpose that will never turn back, but with the spirit of Him who forgave his enemies, and who, when he was reviled, reviled not again. The hero of the wilderness will live for all time, not because he was great but because he was gracious. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." His own

will was strong enough to meet any crisis but he surrendered it to the will of God. It is not the nerveless, anæmic, purposeless men and women that God ordains to lead armies, but the men and women who can say with Tennyson,

> "Our wills are ours, we know not how;
> Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

Meekness is the spirit in which we seek to "make them thine." It is the spirit in which conquest is achieved and victory won. So I would say again that it is what we bring to our religion, rather than what religion brings to us, that determines what we get out of it. I had almost said that your religion is of secondary importance: it is you yourself that are all-important. If the spirit of Christ dominates us, if we are sure that he is ours, and we are his, we shall get something out of the worst religion and a great deal out of the best. The poorest form of faith, to judge it according to our standards, has more to teach us than we shall ever learn. How far the best of us fall below the ideals of the church which has the right to claim us! And how imperfectly we follow in the footsteps of Him whose we are and whom we serve! Let us gird ourselves afresh for the task of living more nearly as we pray, and let us remember that the Christian is mighty only in proportion as he is meek.

"Blessed are the meek, for they as heirs shall obtain possession of the earth" is Weymouth's translation of the text.[1] This word would doubtless suggest much to the people who heard it. To interpret it in the light of the Thirty-seventh Psalm means that the wicked were in possession of the land but their conquest would be only temporary. God's people would conquer and claim it in the end by the might of their meekness. They would have to wait but they would win. So when I see the forces of evil to all outward seeming entrenched, when I see bad men crowned kings and the wicked in prosperity, I say to myself, "This cannot last forever." Then I hear the psalmist say: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace." And yet again the words of the beatitude fall like silver chimes upon my soul: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

[1] *New Testament in Modern Speech*, Weymouth. Reprinted by permission of James Clarke & Co., London.

GOODNESS: THE SUPREME QUEST

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."—*Matthew 5. 6.*

THESE beatitudes concern different states of mind, and the commentators have classified them accordingly. Poverty in spirit and meekness are virtues that have a certain outside value: the poor in spirit and the meek relate themselves to us; they impress us with the virtues they possess, and make us feel our own shortcomings. Mourners too, though they add nothing to our happiness, are related to us: but they abate, rather than inspire, our energies. The poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, by reason of their graces, sustain relations with us which continually appear, and from which we cannot free ourselves. Not so the men and women of the text. Theirs is an attitude of soul which concerns none other than themselves and God. They long for goodness. Their supreme quest is to be at one with God and to enshrine in their characters his power, his purpose, and his purity. Others may see the effects of this hunger and thirst; they may be awed and solemnized as they enter into dealings with those who are its votaries: but primarily this

passion is a matter between the disciple and his Lord, and interveners have no place in its accomplishment.

What is meant by hunger and thirst after righteousness? Righteousness is here used in the sense of goodness: so Moffatt has translated it, and so has the Greek equivalent been rendered by many modern scholars. I am not at all sure that the broader and more general meaning of the word ought not to be included, and that it does not signify justice between man and man. Certainly, if we have a passion for goodness, we shall have a passion for righteousness. It is a poor, tame, spiritless sort of goodness which is content with enjoying God, yet seeks not the betterment of the world in which it lives. Goodness ought always to be propagandist; it cannot truly exist if it is not a saving energy. Its throne is in the soul, but its kingdom is the society in which we move, the men and women by whom we are surrounded. Quietism is a dangerous heresy. Conventions have no significance until they become centers from which the men and women of the Society of Jesus go forth on errands of mercy. We need to be strengthened with might in the inner man, but we are so strengthened in order that we may distribute that which we have received. The church of the Master is not a club; it is an evangelistic agency. When the church

rises in its strength the world will be brought to the feet of God. The desire to see justice between man and man in the world is a Christian desire, and not until that ideal becomes the actual will Christ's kingdom come and his will be done. But goodness is the fountain which feeds all reservoirs of social and natural beneficence, and apart from the element of personal goodness justice cannot live.

But to hunger after goodness! What is this hunger? Well, it is more easily felt than described. To hunger is to feel need; it is to have an aching void; it is to feel that you cannot go on much longer without that which satisfies it. And it is the sign of health. The invalid does not hunger. As soon as he has an appetite he is on the high road to recovery. The periodical and recurring craving for food is one of the hopeful signs that physically all is well with us.

And to thirst after righteousness! What is this thirst? It is the last word in physical desire. Thirst is a more vivid and awful sensation than hunger; and in the text it is an accentuating word. You know what it means when the thermometer has passed one hundred degrees, and the soda fountains are being drained and solid food has become superfluous. You have read the story of Tantalus, and how he was punished for his perfidy. Zeus had confided secrets to him when

Tantalus was a guest at his hospitable table. This confidence was betrayed by Tantalus, who was banished to the lower world with its lake, the water of which rose to his very lips, but never passed beyond them into his mouth. Whether fact or fiction matters little; the story is a parable of life. No wonder that the word "tantalize" (from Tantalus) should signify a punishment which adds mockery to martyrdom.

So, to hunger and thirst can signify nothing less than the passion for that which alone can satisfy them. The reduplicated form heightens the intensity of the meaning. To hunger and thirst after goodness is to make goodness the supreme quest, and to let no other quest compete with it. It means to have an appetite for God, and for all that is connoted by his name.

And will you observe that it is not the attainment of goodness, but the hunger and thirst for it that is here spoken of? If we never had any sense of satisfaction unless we attained goodness, we should be of all men most miserable. For who among us can claim to have attained it? How far short of the ideal of the text have the best of us fallen! It is the hunger and thirst after righteousness to which the beatitude is attached. It is when we feel that we have attained that we have reason to suspect ourselves. The greatest saint called himself the greatest sinner. "Of whom I

am chief," said Paul in that spirit of evangelical self-abasement which is so manifest in all his words. I want to enhearten myself and you by saying that it is endeavor, and not achievement, of which the text speaks: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." Do not give up the quest because you feel yourself unworthy. It is one of the signs that you are making real headway. There is a couplet that concerns many of us who are seeking for the better things:

> "And they who fain would serve thee best
> Are conscious most of wrong within."

Your self-distrust is a healthy sign. It is the self-confident man that has no standing place within the circle of the saints. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

Now if we hunger and thirst after righteousness, there are rules for the replenishment of our spiritual needs which must be obeyed.

1. We Must Take the Right Food

"Dietetics" is to-day a science, and there is such a thing as spiritual dietetics. We must feed at the right table and we must eat nourishing food. The study of the Word of God is of vital importance.

This is the primer of the saints. Take the Book for what you will and it stands the test. Pour all the light that you can command upon it, and you will enhance its value. The Bible is the Book of the Ages and it is still supreme. We plead for no obscurantism in your treatment of this book. Let scholarship concentrate upon it. "There is yet more light and truth to break from God's Holy Word," said Pastor Robinson, and he bore true witness. We need healthy minds as well as healthy bodies if we would appreciate and understand the treasures of this book. We must come to the study of the Word free from prejudices and prepossessions. The Bible is a literature as well as a revelation, and we must not forget that it has in it human elements, and that it has always been through the human that the divine has been revealed. So do not let us be afraid of scholarship, or science, or of any related aids to the study of this book. The Bible does not contradict science; to say that it is literature is to explain some things which were otherwise inexplicable. But the Bible is permanently the Word of God. Religion is not an annex of science. Science is an annex of religion.

The Bible is the book around which the disciples gather. It is the indispensable guide to sainthood. Its provision is of the best. Its food alone can satisfy the hunger of the soul. It sup-

plies the dynamic of all the best agencies of our time, and it cannot be ignored. It is vital to our well-being that we eat the food which the Bible provides for us. The best Christians are Bible Christians and the best preachers are Bible preachers. The preacher who gets his texts outside of the Bible soon runs dry, but the man who finds them here feeds at a perpetual fountain. Emerson says, "The cure of false theology is mother wit." With all due deference to our literary hero I would say, "The cure of false theology is the Bible."

2. We Must Take the Right Food Regularly

The systematic study of the Word of God is the *sine qua non* of sainthood. You never knew a great saint who was ignorant of the principles for which this book stands. There is a private and personal study of the word—the meditative study—without which there cannot be sainthood. No doubt many have been brought to God on the tides of great emotion, and not a few have been kept there by the same processes. Far be it from me to underrate the important work done by the Salvation Army and other similar organizations. They have their place; the depraved must be delivered from their sins and their surroundings, and the low down must be lifted up. But saint-

hood is a growth in grace which is achieved by intellectual and spiritual processes. The man who attains the heights of holiness has reason as well as experience on his side. Now, this reason is expounded in the book which transcends all others. Of course you will say that the systematic study of the Word is not enough, and that private prayer must have its place in the schedule of our exercises; and you are right. That, however, is a subject for larger treatment than I can now allow myself. Besides, what systematic study of the Word of God is possible except on the bended knees of the soul? We are exhorted sometimes to study the Bible as literature: and the exercise is profitable even from this standpoint. But there can be no real study of the Word which is not ultimately devotional. Critical commentaries must be written in a devotional spirit if they are to survive. George Adam Smith's commentary on Isaiah is critical but it is devotional also. There are parts of it which will send you to yours knees. The writings of Marcus Dods have driven me often into the Holy of holies. To be saints we must have understanding. We must have spiritual vision as well as systematic study. We are without excuse if we do not read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest it. Our opportunities are endless. "All things are ours," and we must use them with religious regularity.

3. We Must Take the Right Food Together

We solve the problems of the soul in isolation; we solve the problems of service in association. Solitude is the watchword of self-examination; fellowship the watchword of advance. We achieve the quest for goodness in order that we may enter upon the campaign for goodness and so it takes sainthood to compass philanthropy, and piety to carry through the program of the pragmatist.

We must therefore seek each other's company if we would "serve the present age." For most of us the church is the rallying point. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is." It would seem as if in the early church there was a slackness in attendance on the services of the sanctuary: certainly, such slackness as this is in impressive evidence to-day.

Now, it bodes ill for a nation when God's house is neglected. We must gather here for instruction and inspiration. The pulpit is the channel through which these blessings flow to the people. A decadent pulpit is disastrous. We must emphasize the divine ordinance of preaching. We must feed upon the Word of God, and we must feed in fellowship with one another. The pulpit is effec-

tive in proportion as the pew is responsive. If you would have us fill the pulpit well, you must come and fill the pews. The churches to-day are loud in their complaints that our gifted young men will not offer themselves for the Christian ministry and even the world is asking the reason why. It was never so difficult as now for the man who is a pulpit genius to gather a congregation, and for the man of ordinary gifts the task is next to impossible. And men are asking, "Why enter the ministry if people are so slack? We will serve God some other way." Yet the preacher is the necessity of our life. So we must inspire him by our presence if we would have him inspire us. When those who name the name of Christ are unfaltering in their allegiance to the ordinances of the church, the revival will begin. One of the signs of the hunger and thirst of the text is a quickened interest in the house of God. If the preaching of the present day is below the standard, then disestablish it and bring in a better agency. But try first the other expedient of improving by supporting it. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to revel in the teaching and the preaching of the Word.

And so with all the ordinances of the church. He who hungers and thirsts after goodness will avail himself of all the means of grace that help his growth. Preaching is not the only medium

through which God makes his appeal to the soul. There is prayer, when the soul is brought into direct contact with the realm of the Spirit. There is the sacrament of the Holy Supper, when God makes the bread and wine the channel of blessing. But this communion which we celebrate is a feast of fellowship: and we take the emblems of his broken body as we kneel together, a spiritual unity, at the table of the Lord. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to avail ourselves of all and every means that will fortify the soul in the endeavor of the upward way.

And what is the reward of this quest for goodness?

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness," I quote Weymouth's translation—"for they shall be completely satisfied." I like the assurance—"they shall be completely satisfied." There are too many satisfactions which are at the best but partial; and it gives me great joy to know that the supreme quest is attended with complete satisfaction. Think with me of some satisfactions which are not complete.

a. The quest for wealth yields but a partial satisfaction.

And this is that quest at its best. At times it yields no satisfaction at all. It ends in wretchedness and ruin. Wealth that is won at the cost of character is worse than worthless. Every moral

and spiritual faculty has often been brought down in irretrievable collapse through an undisciplined and unspiritual effort to make money. But think of wealth achieved under the most auspicious circumstances—how unsatisfying it is! The rich man gets no true pleasure out of his gains unless he consecrates them to the cause of Christ, and Bishop Edwin Holt Hughes has well put it when he said, "If the Bible takes an attitude toward the spirit that dominates work, it must also take an attitude toward the spirit that dominates the object of work. It would be small use to have men made right toward toil if they were to be twisted in their relation to the proceeds of toil."[1] There is much wild talk about wealth. There are some men who cannot help making money; it comes as easily to them as it comes to others to spend it. The indiscriminate denunciation of men of means is both unfair and foolish. Money placed upon the altar may do much for the world, and the man of God is the master and not the servant of his means. It is one of the brightest signs of the present times that in all the churches successful business men are dedicating their wealth. The great Mission Hall Movement in England would not have been possible on the present scale had it not been for the munificent generosity of one of

[1] Edwin Holt Hughes, *The Bible and Life*, p. 152. The Methodist Book Concern.

Great Britain's merchant princes, Mr. Joseph Rank. He has a large family of sons and daughters for whom he has made adequate but not extravagant provision. His fortune has been entirely made by himself. He has climbed the ladder with his own hands and feet; converted to God after arriving at mature years, he began to ask himself, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The modern Central Hall, the pride of British Methodism, is the answer. It gathers, in most British cities, the largest congregations to be found in them: in London, at the Central Hall, Westminster, there assembles Sunday by Sunday, through the powerful evangelical ministry of Dr. Dinsdale Young, the greatest Methodist congregation in the world. Many of these halls could not have been built but for the evangelical zeal of Mr. Joseph Rank, who from the early days of his business career has realized himself to be none other than God's steward, responsible to him for that which he has given him power to win. Wealth is always a peril unless it is given back into the hands of Christ; and the reason why it yields for the most part but partial satisfaction is that it is not consecrated. Bishop W. F. McDowell in his Mendenhall Lectures has well said: "Consecration to money making with benevolence as a by-product usually ends in benevolence getting the short end both of the consecration and

the product."[2] At the best the quest for money is hazardous, even though it should succeed; it corrodes like a canker when it is not so placed upon the altar. Some of the most disastrous careers of modern times are those of men who have made money the be-all and end-all of life, and then have finally failed to achieve that upon which they have set their hearts. While money devoted to the highest ends can do much, there are things which money cannot buy.

> " 'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
> 'Tis only God may be had for the asking,
> No price is set on the lavish summer,
> June may be had by the poorest comer."

b. The quest for intellectual wealth yields but a partial satisfaction.

We learn and then we unlearn. We annex an intellectual province and then we see the great kingdom before us upon which we have never yet set foot. We conquer one planet and then we find that there are worlds of unpossessed treasures which have not revealed to us their secrets. "I do not know what I may appear to the world," said Sir Isaac Newton, "but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself in now and then finding a

[2] W. F. McDowell, *This Mind*, p. 47. The Methodist Book Concern.

smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary while the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me"; and in so speaking that great student of the universe spoke for the scholars of all time.

Then so many leaders in the world of thought are handicapped. They lack the qualities which make their work effective. Sir William Robertson Nicoll wrote with insight concerning his tutors and contemporaries at Aberdeen University. Of Bain, the utilitarian philosopher of the school of Mill and Spencer, he remarks: "Bain was a man with no imagination who could not even appreciate imagination in others. He had not the faintest notion of what poetry was. Love poetry in particular had no meaning for him. . . . He was dry, dry as the sands of Arabia."[3] Well, you cannot do much with a man like that even though he be one of the greatest philosophers of the century in which he lived. Least of all should he be quoted as an authority on the subject of religion. A man who is "dry as the sands of Arabia" has no authentic word to speak concerning the religion of the God of love!

Intellectual attainments are valuable only in so far as they can be yoked to the service of humanity. Learning must be translated into a

[3] *Life of W. R. Nicoll*, by T. H. Darlow. Reprinted by permission of the George H. Doran Company, publishers.

speech that ordinary men and women can appreciate and understand if it is to enrich the world. We should climb the mount of intellectual eminence that we may save the multitude. Things are valuable only in so far as they circulate, and this is true of the intellectual and spiritual world as of any other. Great sermons are sermons that are effective, and great saints are saints whose goodness is influential. "What do these here?" asked Oliver Cromwell when he saw the gold and silver ornaments in the Temple.

"Nothing, sire," was the meek reply.

"Then take them down, melt them, mint them into current coin, and send them about doing good." Material wealth, intellectual wealth yield at the best but partial satisfaction.

c. But spiritual wealth yields complete satisfaction. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied." Not that the hunger stops: it grows by what it feeds on. Not that the thirst is quenched: the water of life never satiates those who drink it. We want more, yet we are satisfied. We are ready to eat and drink again, yet we are filled. The service of Christ alone brings satisfaction to those who seek to serve him. Disappointments are frequent in every other kind of enterprise; but this enterprise is a perpetual fountain of delight. In all competing contests there are more blanks

than prizes; in the Christian race every competitor is a crowned conqueror. Rivalry is unknown in the kingdom of the righteous. Every subject stands on equal footing in the presence of the King. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied."

In the town of Scarborough, on the east coast of England, where as a boy I went to school, one of the outstanding ministries of the Methodist Church was that of Edward Smith. He was in his day an evangelist, a great preacher and an agent in God's hands in the winning of thousands of souls for the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a mighty and meteoric ministry in that lovely place which was the scene of his closing days, for there he died. He was buried within sound of the waves of the sea as they break against the North Cliff and roll in thunder against that rockbound coast. A tombstone marks the place where he is laid, and on it are these simple words:

"Edward Smith Who Was Satisfied With Jesus."

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be completely satisfied."

THE REWARD OF THE COMPASSIONATE

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."—*Matthew 5. 7.*

This Beatitude is intimately related to that which precedes it. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness must have some outlet for the spiritual energy which they have received in communion with God. Pure mysticism is an imperfect state considered as an end in itself. We must be practical mystics. We live in a work-a-day world and the common virtues were never needed more than now. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"—"filled" in order that they may be merciful: hallowed by communion in order that they may become helpful. In fact a personal experience of all the graces which are here enumerated enters into the "mercy" of the text. Poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, the passion for goodness are all concentrated in this text.

But the word "merciful" does not express all that is signified by the equivalent Greek. The translation is still kept by Doctor Moffatt because "merciful" covers more of the meaning than any other single word. Weymouth, however, ren-

ders it "compassionate." "Blessed are the compassionate, for they shall receive compassion." Others say that "pitiful" is the nearest to the original. I venture to suggest to you that no single English word meets the case; and that mercy, pity, and compassion are all involved in that quality of character which is here the subject of beatitude. Yet each of these words has a shade of meaning which does not belong to the others. "Mercy" means clemency; it is the gracious attitude of one who sits in the seat of authority toward one who has given offense by the breaking of the law, or by some violations of those canons of conduct which constitute offense. At least, that is how we regard it; the Greek word does not signify what we have come to mean by mercy. With us it is the grace displayed by a superior to an inferior, an act of pardon shown by one who has the power to dispense it toward a guilty suppliant; but that meaning does not wholly meet the case before us.

"Compassionate" is the translation of Doctor Weymouth, and it again falls short. For what does "compassion" mean? It means suffering with another, as the derivation of the word immediately suggests. It means a fellow feeling with the unfortunate in their sorrows and misfortunes, whether these are self-caused or brought about by others. In the case of mercy, superior-

ity and inferiority are involved as between the parties in the case; in the case of "compassion" it is equality, for we are comrades in the same distress. "Pity" seems to mediate between mercy and compassion. Here, again, the idea of the superior obtains but it does not carry with it toward its recipients the notion of abject suppliance which is involved in mercy. But all three words must be related if we are to enter fully into the meaning of the word translated "merciful." And yet I must remind you that it is the state of heart rather than the expression of that state in actual service that is here referred to. Our Lord in these maxims is dealing with first foundations. He does not come to us with pedantic rules for living: he comes to us with a charter which will obtain so long as society exists. He does not say, "Blessed are they who are rich in deeds of compassion." He says, "Blessed are the compassionate"—as though the heart were the wellspring of everything that is worth the having.

It is what we are rather than what we do that is of prime significance. It is the motive rather than the machinery that matters most. The merciful heart will dictate the merciful act. But the merciful heart must come first. It will suffuse the whole being of the man in whom it is the inspiring motive. There are people who do a great deal of rough-and-ready service because

they have a shrewd idea that it is the proper thing to do. But somehow their activities count for little because they are mechanical. Their great deeds are not the expression of a gracious heart. They fall in with philanthropic schemes because they believe them to be right, and they are good at team work; but they lack those finer qualities which make all work for Christ effective. "Blessed are the merciful," says our Lord—the men and women of the merciful heart, those whose motives are a perpetual wellspring of compassion. The motive is everything. The merciful heart must precede the merciful hand. It is the overflowing of the merciful heart that should set the merciful hand in motion, like the pent-up stream whose waters drive the mill wheel. The merciful heart is a constant quantity; like every other faculty, it strengthens and develops with the passing of the years. It is an educated heart. Its acts are not ebullient, undisciplined acts which are fired out haphazard like the stars out of a rocket. They have relation to facts. More harm than we can imagine is being wrought by good men and women who scatter their deeds of mercy without informing themselves of the needs of the recipient. To show true kindness we must acquaint ourselves with the facts of the case. He is the true philanthropist who makes patient investigation, and whose merciful deeds are done in

the light of his knowledge. The merciful heart is schooled and trained. The mercy of which our Lord speaks grows on the stock of experience and information. It is not marked by sentimentalism so much as by strength. It feels deeply, it sees clearly, it acts promptly. I want to impress deeply upon myself as well as upon you the importance of the merciful heart. It anticipates the merciful act. "The quality of mercy" is of paramount importance. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."

Let us examine the three words at which we have hastily glanced to see how far they throw light upon the text.

There is the word, in the Authorized and Revised Versions, rendered.

1. Mercy

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

"Mercy," says Cruden, "is that essential perfection in God whereby he pities and relieves the miseries of his creatures." And I do not know a better definition than that given us by this old-fashioned authority. "God be merciful to me a sinner," cried the publican out of the agony of his self-accusing heart. "God be propitiated to me the sinner," is the accurate rendering—as though he had committed some great offense that

made necessary the exercise of more than ordinary mercy to redeem him. It is the same root word as that which obtains in the text. Now, mercy in man is but the shadow of mercy in God. It is therefore primarily an evangelical grace. We are merciful to others just as God has been merciful to us. We are confronted at once with the great fact of human sinfulness. Really, we are all concluded in sin; it is only a question of more or less with any of us. We are fellow sinners, and we show mercy to others because God has shown mercy to us.

It is the knowledge of what we once were and of what we might again become that surely will incline us to be merciful. We may have been saved from the more heinous sins into which some have fallen. But we realize, if we examine ourselves, that but for grace we might have been even as they are. We must be merciful because we stand in daily need of mercy. Do not let us deceive ourselves by the pagan philosophy that we are unfallen angels and that everything we do is right. Sir Oliver Lodge, in *Man and the Universe,* said some years ago, "The higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment; his mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing."[1] Now, however

[1] Reprinted by permission of George H. Doran Company, publishers.

much we may admire that eminent scientist in his own sphere, we are bound, if we examine our own hearts, to disagree with his conclusion. There is a strong temptation at times to lower the standard that we may pass muster. The standard is in this book: it is an inflexible standard fixed by God himself. Failure to reach this standard puts us out of court when we seek to justify ourselves, and when we utterly fail there is another door through which we may enter—the door of God's mercy. Through that door most of us have passed; we have availed ourselves of the privilege, and now with the privilege we have the injunction: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy." So I plead with you by your knowledge of your own heart to make the beatitude of this text your own. Remember what God has done for you. An old picture of Rossetti's was a while ago unearthed and offered to the public. It was not so old as it at first appeared, for it bore this strange device engraven upon the frame: "Repainted by the artist." God is always at work upon us. Every now and then we surprise ourselves by some unexpected act of service and self-sacrifice. Yet it is not of ourselves; it is of him. We appear anon to great advantage, and the picture has an undiscovered beauty. The explanation is that it has been "Repainted by the Artist." The Divine Artist has made up what

we are, that we may help others to become what God would have them be.

"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

2. Compassion

To be compassionate, to feel with men in their sorrows and distresses, is to share in the attitude of mind and heart which the text calls "merciful." It is more than to feel with them; it is to suffer with them, for passion in its root significance is suffering. When I think of compassion I see the cross of Calvary on the near horizon, and there is no mercy which excludes that spectacle. As an officer in the British Army during the World War I know something of what suffering with another may really mean. Heroisms, which thrill me as I think of them, have come under my immediate notice. Officers, whose hatred of war was as determined and as intense as yours, have been invalided home, and then before they were convalescent they have begged to be allowed to return because they could not bear to think that the men whom they had led were facing without their leadership the murderous rain of bullets on the field. Soldiers, who knew no religion save the religion of comradeship and courage, shared their last crusts with others, and covered with their coats the dear fellows who were stricken unto death.

We must share the sufferings of others. That is what compassion means. As did Jonathan and David, we must strengthen each other's hands in God. Communism has been prostituted to base uses, but it springs from a Christian root. "United we stand: divided we fall" is a maxim that may be applied to many situations. It may certainly be applied to the sharing of sufferings. "The pooling and combining of separate forces," writes a French philosopher, "creates a force which exceeds their sum," and we are the stronger for shouldering the burdens of another. Anyhow, two can more easily bear them than one. You who have a wife who is your unfailing helpmate, or a husband who is the embodiment of strength and gentleness, or a brother who is born for adversity, or a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, know what I mean. In the home burden-bearers ought to be burden-sharers. With husband and wife, there should be no cares, no casuistry, no knowledge which are not shared by both alike. The custom which obtains among us —due in no small degree to the enfranchisement of woman and to the larger life upon which she has now entered—of man and wife traveling as good friends an independent road is responsible for the disastrous loosening of the marriage ties. No marriage is in the Lord which does not mean the sharing of sufferings, and there is a special

sense in which husband and wife must "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." We share each other's sufferings because we share in the sufferings of Christ. The cross stands at the wicket-gate of Christianity, and it looms yet larger as we pursue our pilgrimage. And the apostle's ambition must truly be our own if we are of his house and lineage: "that I may know Him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

3. Pity

"Blessed are the pitiful: for they shall obtain pity."

It is not easy to say where pity shades off into compassion, or where compassion becomes pity, and yet I think there is a difference in the meaning of the two words. Pity is a divine endowment. It is elicited, as we are taught in the New Testament, by sickness, sorrow, and sin. Pity was the emotion that moved our Lord, "when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Mercy is an evangelical attribute. It re-

minds us that we are one in sin, and therefore one in redemption: and that the quality in God which moved him to redeem a world is the quality which his children must show to others if they themselves would be redeemed. Compassion is fellowship in distress, the sharing of the sufferings of those who are one in kinship, who cannot be other than brothers and sisters because God is the Father of them all. Pity is the emotion awakened by man's need. It suggests that the suppliant is in a state of helplessness and even hopelessness, and it moves us toward the succor of those who are distressed.

Human nature at its best is frail. We see in men and women who have fallen the tragedy which may possibly come upon ourselves. There is no security in the arm of flesh. Christ enthroned in the heart alone can keep the invader from taking possession. I have seen so many who have made shipwreck that I fear for myself. I must not judge lest I be in danger of judgment. I must be merciful as well as just. I have not all the facts before me which will enable me to judge truly. And even if I had, my own faculty of sight is so perverted that I cannot trust it to see things in their true perspective. The world is the poorer for any man who breaks down in character, for any woman whose robes are soiled through the corrupting influences by which she is

surrounded. Who am I that I should judge of those that fall? All I can do is to look on in silence, to pity them and pray. Scorn has no place in the vocabulary of Christian virtues. It was the priest and the Levite who left the wounded man weltering in blood as they passed by on the other side of the Jericho road. The good Samaritan crossed over to him and bandaged the wounded sufferer and pouring in oil and wine. And pity must be converted into Christian currency; it must be translated into practice; it must pursue the sinner like an angel of mercy even to the very verge of the pit. We are not called to sit in judgment upon those who have gone astray. The knowledge that they have wandered, when it is brought home to them, is often like the mark of Cain—a punishment greater than they can bear. We must not add to such punishment by expulsions and ostracisms. We have not the data for judgment, therefore let us abstain from judging; and in gratitude for the redeeming pity of God to us, let us be pitiful to others.

These, then, are the qualities which are connoted by the composite virtue of the text: mercy, compassion, and pity. They are qualities which stand in close relation to each other, yet each has its own shade of meaning as color melts into color in the spectrum. It was a sad world in which this great truth was proclaimed. At the

time when Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount revenge was rampant in many a heart, and recriminations were fierce and frequent between class and class. Social differences had already begun to obtrude themselves, and ecclesiastical controversies were dividing men into hostile and angry factions. Never was the message of this beatitude needed more than then, never perhaps more than now, for in many respects the conditions which obtained in the days of Christ's ministry upon earth are being repeated at the present time. The cleavage in society is to-day deeper than ever before. The classes and masses wage warfare from the altitudes of their own self-sufficiency on either side of the valley of hate which divides them from each other. Never was it more difficult than now to get the partisan to see the other fellow's points of view. Nor is the clash of arms confined to industrial questions only. In the world of religion there are other examples of the same intractability. Union is in the air. It has been much talked about ever since I was born. On the other side of the Atlantic it was first mooted among the different kinds of Methodists. It has been under way for nearly two decades, but it is not yet an accomplished fact; during the last few years Episcopalians have approached the non-Episcopal churches with a similar object in view, but the ghost of apostolical

succession has driven each of the parties to the overture back to his own camp. In America the long-projected union between the Methodists of the North and South hangs fire because we cannot see that nonessentials are of slight value in comparison with things that matter. Canada has led the world in a movement that must be ever dear to the heart of Jesus Christ. There are nonconcurrents, I know, but they do not number ten per cent of the total, and already the blessing of God has rested richly upon a union which aims at still further conquests, for *pourparlers* concerning the inclusion of all the Protestant churches in the Dominion have since been entered into. If Christians earnestly desire that the world accept the gospel of peace, with all its glorious implications, they must themselves practice its precepts. When the churches have each other by the throat the world says, "A plague on all your houses." We must appreciate each other's viewpoint, and give to those who do not see eye to eye with us credit for a sincerity which is devoid of all depleting motives. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

How Are the Merciful Blessed?

They obtain mercy. Moffatt's rendering of the text is "Blessed are the merciful! they will find mercy." The uniting conjunction "for" is

omitted in this translation. Nor is this omission without reason. The merciful are not blessed simply because they obtain rewards. It is true to say that here there is a strange mingling of cause and effect. The arcs meet to form the circle and their point of meeting is difficult to define. If we are merciful, we obtain mercy; and if we obtain mercy, we must be merciful. But that is a different saying from the affirmation that we shall obtain mercy because, or on the sole ground that, we are merciful. In other words, we are not merciful with our eyes upon ourselves, but with our eyes upon others. Mercifulness would lose its virtue if it were a grace of character to be cultivated only because there was a prize in view. We are merciful because of what we are and not because of what we hope to get. Indeed, the beatitude would still stand if it were simply "Blessed are the merciful." It would still attest itself if the second sentence were expunged. For are not the merciful blessed in themselves? Who is so happy as the man who goes about the city with a heart of compassion? the man who sees the best in everybody and hopes for the best even from the worst? Who is so happy as the woman who spends herself and is spent for others, who lives to make the world a better and a brighter place, whose aim is to elevate and ennoble the womanhood of the community, and who is full of

mercy and good works? These are the saints of the city and of the State; they think not of obtaining mercy but of being merciful. They

> "Ask for no reward,
> Except to serve Thee still."

But it is none the less true that the merciful obtain mercy. It follows as the night the day that the compassionate do receive repayment in their own coin. They don't look for it: they don't ask for it; but it comes to them without the asking. We get what we give. In the main other people are to us what we are to them. The motto of the founder of a great business house in this country is, "Go one better than the other man"; that is, beat him in obligingness, in kindness as well as in the quality of your goods. Travel with him the second mile even though your obligations are discharged by the companionship of the first. If he is churlish, smother him with your own amiability; if he is mean to you, make him ashamed of himself by being generous to him. "Go one better than the other man." Be merciful without a thought of reward. The reward will come. But if it fails, that is of no consequence to you. Your duty is clear, and it should be your constant delight. "Blessed are the merciful! they will find mercy."

This is a great, ennobling Christian virtue

whose roots go deep down into evangelical religion. No doubt the text refers primarily to the obtaining of mercy at the hands of God rather than at the hands of man. Does God then make the mercifulness of man the occasion of showing him mercy from day to day, and especially, as the text would seem to suggest, at the Day of Judgment? Not so do I understand it. Mercy is a divine prerogative. It is God's free gift to man, and is not therefore by any to be purchased. The verse suggests, then, that the merciful man is he whose sins have been forgiven, and that he is merciful simply because he has entered into and undertaken the obligations of a child of God—the child who has returned and has resumed his place in the family of Christian privilege. There is a kindness which is of nature. But there is a kindness which is of grace. It will do many beautiful deeds but it will do them from another motive. With the Christian who is merciful alleviation is not enough. He seeks to get at the root of the malady—not merely to do men good but to make them good. He knows that there is no lasting philanthropy which is not wedded to Christianity, and that the streams which are for the healing of the world flow from beneath the altar of God. The social reformer seeks to adjust the circumstances of men; the Christian reformer seeks to get at their hearts. The social

reformer stops at the circumstances; the Christian reformer deals with the circumstances on the way to the soul. Be it yours to choose the better part and evermore to bear in mind that mercy in man is but a faint reflection of mercy in God. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

HOW THE EARTH-BOUND MAY SEE GOD

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."—*Matthew 5. 8.*

THE text holds before us a great ideal. Even if it be not often realized, it is realizable. Our Lord evidently thought that it ought to be attained, or he would not have mocked his friends and followers by uttering this beatitude. He seeks to lead them, as he seeks to lead us, to the heights of spiritual experience, so that his disciples may see and enter into that larger and fuller life which is hid with Christ in God. Various classifications of the Beatitudes have been made; but it seems to me that this beatitude is the climax of them all. It is the peak of perfection. All the preceding graces are as so many resting places on the mountainside; and this is the summit of the mountain.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," said our Lord. "Blessed are the incorrupt, the self-disciplined, the uncontaminated, the undefiled." Now, there are those who speak of purity of heart as if it were simply a passive virtue, as if it had no relation to moral energy and effort, and were be-

stowed without either merit or demerit on the part of the receiver. They fail to understand the meaning of the expression. Purity of heart is not an endowment, but an attainment. It follows upon poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and mercifulness; all these gifts and graces are attributes of the pure in heart. For the pure in heart are the best illustrations of each of the virtues upon which a blessing is pronounced. What finer example, for instance, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness can be found than that which is given by him who has entered into this purity? Test the other graces and you will discover how completely they are answered and illustrated in the life of him who has attained it.

Let me clear the way for other questions by saying frankly that no consideration of this text can be adequate which does not include the grace of chastity: for that is manifestly involved. The heart is the secret of desire. Therefore "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Chastity is fundamentally an affair of the heart. Social purity will never be insured by enactments. Ultimately it will not be accomplished by clean statute books, but by cleansed hearts. And in so saying I do not underrate the clean statute book. We must help the world in all possible ways to be better than it is.

All laws are good which tend to diminish vice and increase virtue. But the pure in heart are always the men and women who make pure laws. Those who are alien to the pursuance and practice of personal purity will not undertake such a task. The world itself has no part or lot in such a matter because it has a bias toward impurity. It has no instruments for accomplishing this work because it has no interest in doing it. The world shows its disdain for purity by the way in which it ignores all moral fault. The purveyors of pleasure make their own laws, and the liberty which they claim for themselves often becomes license of a lurid color. You will not get the civilized pagans of our day to acclaim this text. The world is opportunist in its morals, and as long as its conventional standards are not violated it will give its votaries freedom to do pretty much as they please. You may see its standards in the literature and especially in the fiction of our day. The discussion of sex-problems seems necessary to the modern novel if it is to have a market. The movie-house and theater must pander to the prurient. I do not forget that there is a literature in fiction of high and ennobling order, and that there are plays in which the best elements of life are fully represented. I hold no brief for the Puritan denunciation of the theater. It is not the theater which is wrong, it is those

who create the public taste for that which is degrading. It is not fiction that is at fault, it is the host of fiction lovers who determine the supply by the demand. No doubt both fiction and the drama leave much to be desired. But it is futile to denounce authors and playwrights because they furnish what is called for. It is the demand that is wrong. The reason why the stream is polluted is that it is poisoned at the fountain. We create the fictions of our day: we create the theater: the modern journal is the response of editors and managers to the request of their readers. All these things exist for us: we do not exist for them. Naturally, the purveyors of pleasure do not rise above our level; they rise up to it, and when we rise higher so will they. We can bring bad plays to an end by refusing to see them. The unpopular piece is withdrawn as soon as it ceases to pay. We can obliterate the novel of unwholesome tendency by refusing to read it. We can kill the unedifying journal by refusing to subscribe to it. The world is largely in our hands, and it is men and women that standardize the public taste. But do not imagine, on the other hand, that purity of heart means moral obscurantism. It is not the handmaid of ignorance. There are physiological questions which ought not to be kept from our young people. Parents have often been grossly culpable in con-

cealing from their children things they ought to know. The ignorance in which a generation ago our youths and maidens grew up was not infrequently the cause of moral collapse in the case of some for whom the sudden revelation was too much. We have a sacred and solemn duty to discharge to our young people in keeping constantly before them that momentous truth that the "body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." And yet this duty can be discharged only by men and women of whom the text is true. Purity of heart is our only certificate for this great task. Purity of heart too alone can deliver the worlds of literature and amusement from the cesspools of iniquity into which they are in danger of falling. The world cannot redeem itself. Its sources of redemption are out of sight. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

What are the leading characteristics of this purity? They are included in the preceding beatitudes. Let us endeavor to summarize them succinctly.

1. Simplicity

The pure in heart possess the secret of simplicity. And what does simplicity mean? The derivation of the word explains it. It means "onefold." Other things are twofold, threefold, fourfold, manifold, until they are nearly all-fold,

so often have they been doubled and quadrupled and reduplicated and repeated. But the saint has only onefold. He is straight, direct, easily seen, and readily understood. In his character there are no corners to be explained, no crevices in which the cobwebs hide, no darkness in the roof above the dwelling house which the moles and the bats can claim for their abode. That is what simplicity means. It means to be without haunting secrets, the possible divulgence of which keeps their victim in a constant state of dread. It means to be without sleeves. One came the other day and said: "Will you accept this coin?" The coin was on the palm of his hand; then it suddenly disappeared. What was the explanation of the mystery? It was done by sleight of hand. The coin had vanished into his sleeve. The pure in heart have no sleeves. They have no commercial, or social, or ecclesiastical conjuring tricks. There is nothing to explain away. They are honorable and honest men and women. They conceal nothing that is vital. So they carry heaven both in their hearts and in their countenances. They are like stainless cutlery; they don't escape contact with impurity, but they escape contamination. The defilement washed off and they are as though it had not touched them. Simplicity is not ignorance. It is guilelessness. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."

Nathanael was not harmless; he was blameless. Simplicity is not an inheritance; it is an achievement. It is a grace conferred in answer to believing prayer, and is one of the characteristics of the pure in heart. "Blessed are the simple, the saints of onefold: for they shall see God."

2. Sincerity

The pure in heart have the further grace of sincerity. And what is sincerity? Again the derivation of the word explains it. Sincere is *sine cera*—"without wax." Let me speak imaginatively. Here is a sculptor who has just completed his masterpiece. It is a Phidias, or a Scopas, or a Praxiteles. The contemporary connoisseur in sculpture who is invited to give his opinion, exclaims: "Wonderful! but is it *sine cera* —without wax? Are there no flaws in the marble? Is there no fissure filled in and glossed over so as to conceal the fracture?" That was the vital question; and to-day it is vital in the case of men as well as monuments. Are we sincere? Sincerity differs from simplicity. The lack spells imperfection in either case, but the imperfection is not the same. Sincerity needs to be guided by God. We may be mistakenly sincere. We are accustomed to say that sincerity is everything and that nothing else counts. It is a sheer self-delusion. Sincerity needs enlightenment if it

is to justify itself. A while ago I was sincerely convinced that a certain train left the depot at ten o'clock. In point of fact it was scheduled for half past ten. Fortunately for me, the mistake was on the right side. It was annoying that I wasted half an hour by being there too early; it would have been disastrous if I had been half an hour late. The sincerity of the saint must be informed sincerity. We must seek the "wise and understanding heart." "Blessed are the sincere, the saints who have no flaw or fissure, for they shall see God."

Purity of heart has always been held before the Christian as an ideal to be striven after. Many and various have been the means employed in order to insure it. Chief among these means is asceticism, the subordination of the body in order that the soul may be delivered from that which hurts and hinders its development. Asceticism is used to-day in a far finer sense than that in which it was originally employed. Originally it was synonymous with such exercises as fasting and flagellation of the flesh. To-day it stands for self-discipline, the control of the lower in order to secure the ascendancy of the higher powers. It erroneously assumes, however, a contrariety between the flesh and the spirit, a hideous kind of dualism of two incompatible elements which are continually warring against

each other. Asceticism is often outwardly expressed in a restricted diet, in the castigation of the body, and in those purgatorial practices which even now obtain. It is closely related to monasticism; for in both systems poverty and celibacy have often played a leading part. Some of its exponents have quoted the case of our Lord himself in support of this ideal. They have pointed out that he was never married, and that his life was marked by austerities for which even his followers were not prepared. They have cited also Saint Paul as an illustration of their doctrine that it is better to be without than to be with the pleasures and the pursuits on which so many are intent; and they have pointed out that, indeed, the apostle seems at times to be a disciple of that dualism of which asceticism is both the cause and the effect. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Or yet again: "I buffet my body and bring it into bondage lest by any means after that I have preached to others I myself should be rejected"—as though he should say that purity of spirit can be secured only at the price of the bondage of the body. Later the Essenes and the Monastic orders followed and in varying forms asceticism has survived until the present. Let me say at once that there is no

countenance in this book for any such asceticism except by wresting texts from contexts. Jesus Christ and Saint Paul were patterns of self-discipline, but they were not ascetics. Jesus "came eating and drinking," and he uttered for all time the ethics of Christian living: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." And Saint Paul, too, was citizen as well as saint, who was loyal to the state as well as to the church, and who exhorted that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty." Indeed, it is one of the amiable ironies of history that those who rallied to the standard of asceticism began soon to stretch out helpful hands to the world; that mendicant orders became ministers of mercy, and that the Jesuits—scattered the wide-world over, yet united by the threefold bond of poverty, chastity, and obedience, Knights of the Holy Commonwealth of Christian Crusaders, and Conscripts of the Cross—should to-day be messengers of Jesus to people of every clime and country. Let us acclaim their devotion however much we differ from their doctrine. For asceticism has failed miserably as a method of attaining purity. Instead of cleansing it has hardened the

heart; it has generated pride and selfishness instead of that lowliness and self-sacrifice which always authenticate the spirit and temper of the saint.

What, then, is the present-day expression of this purity of heart? How shall we translate it into that modern speech which has currency among us? Obviously, it is no reserved sacrament: it is open to all Christ's followers to attain it; and yet only the inner circle scale its heights and sound its depths. Mysticism is another word for purity of heart, a word which, by the way, has not always been employed in a distinctly Christian sense. One who was cradled in the Mohammedan faith, and who repudiated its dogmas without entirely disentangling himself from its traditions, wrote:

"Union exists beyond all thought and speech
Between Great Allah and the soul of each."

But the key word of Christian mysticism is to be found in Saint Paul's letter to the Colossians: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." That is true mysticism. First of all it is a state of elevation, then of communion in concealment. Its springs

are unseen. Its sources are out of sight. Mysticism has been well defined by a Roman Catholic writer as an "extraordinary degree of union with God both in knowledge and in love." Now, what is this but purity of heart? It is what John Wesley would have called the doctrine of perfect love. In Mr. Darlow's splendid portraiture of Sir William Robertson Nicoll there is a chapter on mysticism containing an epoch-making letter from Sir William from which I quote: "Christian mysticism emphasized, if possible, the Christian doctrine that the chief business of life is to find God, and that in finding God all is included. God is to be found by the inward way, but the pursuance of the inward path may involve great external annoyances. In order to pursue the inward way it may be necessary to abandon worldly ambitions and possessions. In any case the heart must be delivered from them. Does the New Testament contemplate the case of the rich Christian? Does it go any higher than having food and raiment, therewith let us be content? Is not a rich mystic in any sense a real contradiction in terms?"[1] Well, I have not so learned of Christ. It is purity of heart that matters, not material possessions. If material possessions are regarded as being of

[1] *Life of William Robertson Nicoll*, by T. H. Darlow. Reprinted by permission of George H. Doran Company, publishers.

secondary importance; if they are our servants and not our masters, they will not interfere with spiritual communion. There are some Christian men whom God has blessed with much material prosperity, yet they have entered into mystical union with Christ. They have been raised together with Christ. Their minds have been set upon the things that are above; their lives are hid with Christ in God. They regard themselves simply as stewards; their wealth is laid upon the altar, and they use it without abusing it. They distribute their money at the bidding of the inner voice. But they are detached from it. There is no woe uttered against wealth as such. It is "he that getteth riches and not by right" that "at his end shall be a fool." Money and mysticism are not of necessity in deadly antagonism. It is the heart that regulates the life. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

How shall the pure in heart see God? Not with the outer but with the inner eyes. It is spiritual sight that is here referred to, and spiritual sight is conditioned by the state of the soul. The pure in heart see God everywhere in all the creations and creatures which his hands have made. The God within them responds to the God without. They see God in the history of the world, in conflict and tumult, in wars and rumors of wars. They are assured that it is God's hand

which guides even untoward events, and that he has often made the wrath of men to praise him. They look back on struggles for ascendency which can end only one way, for spite of seeming reverses "ever the right comes uppermost and ever justice is done." The tyrant is lifted up only that he may be dashed down with the more terrific violence. The oppressor wears a withered laurel wreath. It is justice and truth and righteousness that wear the everlasting crown. And the history of nations bears witness to this truth. We have proved it among ourselves. For four long, weary years the struggle between the North and South held out. There were times when Abraham Lincoln seemed to be the only statesman on this continent who had faith in God and the cause which he believed that God had made his own. Other nations looked on with curious and critical eyes. With some of our own people patriotism had become utterly perverted—"the last refuge of the scoundrel." But God led his invisible army into the field, and America became known as the home of the great humanities, the fatherland of the free. The world did not quite appreciate the significance of the struggle when it was at its height. But as we look back we see that God's hand was in it all. "God is his own interpreter," and he *has* made it plain.

But the pure in heart especially see God in

Jesus Christ his Son. And they acclaim not merely his divinity, but his deity. To the pure in heart he is "very God of very God." You do not find the pure in heart engaged in controversy as to the deity of our Lord; to the saints he authenticates himself. It is not an open question for casuistry to debate; it is settled in the higher court. It postulates moral purity to say truly that Christ is God. The purity of the child of God awakens responsive echoes in him who is in a special and exclusive sense the Son of God; and it is because he is perfect man that I believe him to be perfect God. When the doctrine of the deity of Christ is in suspense it is usually because the lamp of sacrifice is burning low. Men do not cavil about Christ when they live in close communion with him. It is when they love him most ardently and obey him most implicitly that he shines into their hearts in all the richness of his full-orbed personality. The remedy for the lowered vitality of Christian communities and individuals is the baptism of the Spirit who purifies the heart and proclaims that Jesus is Lord, the Lord and Master of us all, shining upon the world he has redeemed in all his regal glory, the "glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

MEN OF RANK

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children [R. V., "sons"] of God."—*Matthew 5. 9.*

HITHERTO our Lord has spoken of personal and passive graces which are created and nurtured in the soul; graces which grow within and appear without. But the peacemaker is of another order. For the most part he is an active intervener amid the discords and disturbances of the world. True, he has had no hand in the upset and that is an added reason why he should play his part in the settlement.

His qualification is that he should have passed through all the previous experiences enumerated in this chapter. He must be a reincarnation of its virtues. Poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, the passion for goodness, for mercy and for purity of heart—all must be enshrined in him. No man can be a peacemaker unless he is himself an embodiment of them all. Peacemaking necessitates a moral training which is not lightly achieved. Only he who lives on serene heights can successfully deal with the disputes of men. The moment he descends to a lower level his power of rendering the service of the peace-

maker is gone. How often is this seen in the affairs of the city and the state! Let it be known that a public man has an ax to grind, and he is at once discarded. I have seen parties rent in twain because it has been patent that self-seeking men wish to govern. The peacemaker must be a man of the highest moral excellence: he must be a saint in order to qualify for the gracious office of which we are now thinking. The ordinary man who rushes in without the necessary moral equipment will do more harm than good. None but those who have graduated in the university of sainthood are fit to play this part.

Nor is the making of peace easy of accomplishment. It is one of the fine arts. It requires more tact, more knowledge, more patience—in a word more gifts and graces than almost any other. Indeed, peace itself, though a Christian, is a very complex gift. It involves so much: unless it rests upon a firm foundation it is sure to fail. We sometimes hear people speak of having "smoothed things over," of "pouring oil on troubled waters," and the like. But unless they have got further than the process of smoothing and purring and pouring oil, all that they have done is to secure a temporary lull which is a very unreal peace, and which may at any time disclose its real self. Never to tackle any difficulty, never to face the foe which shakes his unprovoked fist at you, may

be keeping the peace, but it is not peace-making. Peace-making is a far more arduous exercise than peace-keeping. And what passes for peace-keeping may be a quite ignoble art, when it means that selfishness or cowardice is the explanation of it all. To stand by with folded arms while tyranny triumphs over meekness may be keeping the peace but it is keeping it at the cost of character, and brings no beatitude in its train. To smooth or smother discontent is not to convert it into a fountain of delight. It means that the cause of it is only concealed and that it may at any time burst forth with volcanic fury and devastate both friend and foe alike. The peace that is to last must rest upon a strong foundation.

Who are the peacemakers? Let us try to answer this question in terms of to-day. There are peacemakers in all walks of life—men and women who are anxious and eager to compose the differences which divide men. Think, then with me:

1. Our International Peacemakers

There is growing up among us a sentiment in favor of the abolition of war, and when that sentiment becomes a conviction wars will positively cease. For long ages war has been tolerated upon the earth as a necessary evil; many of us are now convinced that it is an evil that is unnecessary.

The feeling in favor of the abolition of war grows apace, and those who speak the Anglo-Saxon tongue have to-day a great responsibility resting upon them. We can bring wars to an end when we so determine. The United States and Canada are examples to the whole world of nations so completely trusting each other that a frontier of five thousand miles is without naval or military defense. The era of the huge standing army must indeed come to an end if commercial relations are to be re-established among the nations of the world. Militarism withers the wealth of the world and is responsible for many of its woes. Unfortunately, it is kept alive by despots and diplomats who dictate policies and arrange wars which are left to the rank and file to carry through. Von Moltke wrote, "War is an element of the order of the world established by God"—and the nation which gave him his proud pre-eminence has been ruined by the doctrine which he taught. Militarism is opposed to the spirit and genius of America. It is the child of despotism, and therefore sounds the death knell of democracy. Free speech is stifled under militaristic domination. There is no government worth speaking of in countries which are under military rule. Government implies the concurrence of the governed; and there can be no consent where there is compulsion.

It is well that there should be a good understanding among those who speak our language. America and Great Britain are nearer to each other than some intolerant nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic would have us believe. Mr. Newton Rowell has reminded us in his great work, *The British Empire and World Peace,* of the international understanding which was arrived at in 1914, "when the United States concluded a convention with Great Britain for the establishment of a permanent Peace Commission to investigate and report on all disputes between the two nations of every nature whatsoever other than disputes the settlement of which is provided for, and, in fact, achieved under existing agreement. The convention further provides that neither party is to declare war or begin hostilities during such investigation and before this report is submitted."[1] Is not this a great advance toward that common understanding which is involved in a League of Nations? I speak not of The League of Nations, though it has accomplished more than its critics have ever been willing to allow. But if the title is distasteful, let us abolish it and call the great idea by another name. Our object is to get war out of the world, and that purpose was embodied and adopted by the

[1] *The British Empire and World Peace*, by Newton W. Rowell, K. C. Reprinted by permission.

General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1924—adopted in an atmosphere charged with spiritual emotions, in resolutions which first startled and then sobered all nations in which the name of Christ is named.

Every Christian sentiment is an eternal protest against militarism; and the World War was entered into in defiance of the underlying principles of the gospel of the Prince of Peace. The European cataclysm was no reproach to Christianity but, rather, a reflection on the church. If the church had spoken with a united voice, that catastrophe would not have fallen upon the world. The explanation of it all was that the church had failed to be effective. She had ceased to insist on the application of Christianity to the affairs of common life. It was not Christianity that was at fault; it was Christians. Chesterton's dictum cannot be too often quoted: "It is not that Christianity has been tried and has failed. It is that it has been found difficult and not tried." The church is the repository of Christianity, and Christianity can go no further and no faster than the church. The church failed miserably in the world crisis. Divided counsels obtained among us. The manifestoes of ministers in Great Britain were counter-manifestoed by Christian ministers in Germany. Men who were regarded as pillars of the Protestant faith defended the

aggressors even in their deeds of treachery. Deceit was condoned and submarine warfare praised as patriotism. No wonder that the world turned its back on the church and drowned its disappointment in sensuous excesses.

But the failure of the church is not the failure of Christianity. Hypocrisy is a testimony to sincerity, and if there were no coins there could be no counterfeits. Christianity is not yet enthroned but it is hastening its coronation, and men who have little confidence in the church are honoring the name of Christ. The menace of militarism can be brought to an end only by a continual proclamation of the gospel of peace. I am increasingly convinced that Christian missions offer the complete solution of this pressing problem. It is only by obedience to the divine command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" that the resurgent waves of war will be tranquillized. This was Christ's mandate to his immediate followers, and through them to his followers of every clime and country. Are you doing your bit to enthrone securely the Prince of Peace in this weary, war-stricken world? Let us not hide ourselves in vague generalities. If war is not brought to an end, this world will be a hell above ground. We are told that the next war will take place in the air; that the arching heavens will be the battle-

ground of the future. And there are rumors of high explosives and poisonous gases far exceeding in horror all that we have known. If we do not end war, war will end us. What, then, can we do? We can declaim against it; we can refuse our support to statesmen who are recognized to be opposed to peace. In America and Great Britain public men are not able to hide their light under a bushel. We know the men who delight in war and it is our duty to dethrone them. We each have a voice, a vote; what are we doing with them? This problem of internationalism is the most urgent in the world. Are you pulling your weight? You young people must awake to your sense of vocation. The present Bishop of Ripon in England, Doctor Burroughs, tells us, in his book *The Way of Peace,* of a boy in a British public school who was playing Rugby football in one of the great matches of the season. He was keen for the honor of his side. When the contest was fast and furious and he was running with the ball toward the goal line of the opposing side he was tackled and thrown, and in the mêlée which followed his leg was badly broken. Not knowing what had happened the assailant held on to the broken leg. The boy was still in possession of the ball and, in spite of the agony, he wriggled along the ground on his elbows, got it over the line, and so scored the winning try.

The injured leg was pulled right out by the grip of the other upon it, and the hero had to go straight to the sanitarium. It was rather a bad case, and the father was sent for. He came, heard the story, and went to the lad's bedside, proud at heart but pretending severity.

"Well, young man," he began, "what do you mean by doing this sort of thing?"

The boy looked up and answered, apologetically, "I couldn't help it, father; we were two points down."[1]

Young people, the church is in danger of being beaten. "We are two points down." This is the day for chivalry; this is the occasion for courage. We want to carry the flag to the high place of the field. We want to see Jesus crowned in our international relationships, and—"we are two points down." Who will step into the breach? Will you not all join us in this holy crusade, deeming no task too terrible, no sacrifice too great, if only the Christ who has been crucified afresh in the present generation may be resurrected and enthroned? Rally to the help of the church. She is "two points down."

2. Our Ecclesiastical Peacemakers

There is also slowly evolving among us a spirit of tolerance and trust such as the churches have

[1] *The Way of Peace*, by E. A. Burroughs.

not known before. Church union is in the ascendent. It is sometimes said that attempts which end in failure leave the negotiating parties more widely separate than ever. I am not so persuaded. I believe there is value in these endeavors after union even though they do not at first succeed. At any rate we get to know each other better, and we ought, therefore, to have a more correct appreciation of each other's point of view. The union of the Methodist Churches on both sides of the Atlantic has not been easy of accomplishment. There are signs, however, in Britain that it will not be indefinitely delayed; and it cannot be for long among ourselves that the invitation of the North will be refused by our brethren of the South. Good people are not easy to persuade at any time, and the better they appear to be the more likely they are to be intrenched in their own infallibility. It is often the most difficult task to persuade a sincere man that others are equally sincere, and that sincerity is not virtuous except it be enlightened by the Spirit of God. I call to mind a saying of Bishop Mandell Creighton's to the effect that there is more badness in good people than they themselves think and more goodness in bad people than the good are willing to admit. The stubbornness of the saints has almost passed into a proverb. Unions are always hard to negotiate. Combines are not unions; that is why they

so often fall asunder. But unions live, flourish, and abide because the spirit of life is in them.

The greatest ecclesiastical movement of our time is that which has been consummated in the *United Church of Canada.* In our day there has been nothing to approach it. We cannot see its far-reaching issues now, and they will not be seen in all their promise and power by the present generation. The full significance of the movement will appear a century ahead. The sun has only just begun to fringe the horizon, and we must wait if we would see it in its noonday splendor. What we know now is that it is over twenty years ago since the first overtures were made, that the movement grew slowly at first and more rapidly later, that prayer and patience and tact were often tested to their uttermost, that at times the difficulties seemed insurmountable, that the union leaders of all churches placed themselves under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and that union was at last achieved. The Methodists in their entirety were joined—with substantial unanimity—by the Congregationalists and by eighty per cent of the Presbyterians in this act of Christian confederacy. It is true that twenty per cent of the Presbyterians were nonconcurrents, doubtless for good reasons of their own. But of the negotiating churches over ninety per cent united on the tenth of June in the year of our

Lord one thousand nine hundred and twenty-five, the most momentous year in the history of the great dominion of the north. This glorious achievement has already given a new impulse to the religious life of the people, who feel that they have a goodly heritage and that they are called in Carey's words to "expect great things from God, to attempt great things for God."

Ecclesiastical peacemakers deserve better things of the generation which they serve than they ever seem to receive. The fruits of their work do not immediately appear. Often they are misunderstood and sometimes they are misrepresented. Pioneers render themselves liable to persecution; and ecclesiastical pathfinders do not sleep upon beds of roses. I know something of what the church leaders in Canada were called to endure. But they "endured as seeing Him who is invisible," and denunciations did not deflect them from the course which God had marked out for them. And have they not their reward even now? The world has turned to Canada for inspiration and instruction. It sees what was thought to be impossible converted into actual fact. The dream of two decades has become a deed. Canada has led the way in one of the greatest spiritual achievements that the world has ever witnessed, and we seem to hear in her triumph song of thankfulness the prelude to the great anthem of universal

exultation when "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

3. Our Evangelical Peacemakers

Are there any peacemakers at all comparable to these? And are we not all ordained to this office, the office of seeking peace for ourselves and proclaiming that peace to others? "Have you found peace?" the old evangelicals used to ask, and the question awakens lovely memories in the hearts of many of us here. "Have you found peace?" Years ago that question sounded clear above the tumult of our warring passions—and it did not sound in vain. Peace was what we sorely needed, and Jesus spoke the word of peace. Sometimes it came in the pew; sometimes in the prayer; to-day it came at the altar; anon in the moment of private meditation. The peace evangelic has in the case of some of you been followed by another peace, that mystic gift of the God of peace who has come to you to sanctify you wholly. It is when we receive this peace that we want others to share it. When once we possess it we cannot do other than proclaim it. Our Lord's bequest may become your portion and you may here and now enter upon that great inheritance.

"Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin,
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within."

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!"

The prophet's rhapsody means more to you and me than the advent of messengers with the announcement of the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Babylon. It contains the authentic gospel. Is anything on this earth of ours so beautiful as the feet of him that bringeth good tidings? What if he comes with tidings that war is at an end, and that henceforth the nations of the earth are to be enswathed in an everlasting peace? What if he comes with the tidings that the sailor boy we thought drowned at sea—he whom we thought dead—is alive, whom we thought lost is found? What if he comes with the tidings that industrial strifes are ended, that every class in the community has resolved to accept and to apply the gospel of the Golden Rule? "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." What if he comes with the tidings that a revival of religion has broken out, and that the churches are filled again, and that commerce is cleansed of its impurities, and theaters are converted into temples to receive the overflowing crowds of would-be worshipers?

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!"

I cannot bring you tidings of revolutions and of rescues, but I can publish peace. I can tell you of a God who would fain show you the path of life; in whose "presence is fullness of joy," which you may know here and now, and at whose "right hand there are pleasures forevermore"; or, as it has been rendered, "There is loveliness forever." Why do we publish peace? Because the natural man is at enmity with God. There is no getting away from it. Yet God himself takes the initiative. He is our peace. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," and reconciliation is "loveliness forever."

Well, "Blessed are the peacemakers! for it is they who will be recognized as sons of God."

Others may do great things without securing the approval they deserve. Righteousness is not always rewarded. Courage is not always crowned. But the peacemakers will be recognized: men will indicate them as they go their way. Theirs is a special livery which distinguishes them from other saints. "It is they who will be recognized as sons of God." Moffatt's translation is more emphatic still: "They will be ranked sons of God." In military circles the privates are distinguished from the officers by rank; and the saints are here pictured as in tiers or ranks—the highest rank of all being that of sons of God. What is that shining galaxy high up

above the rest? you ask. And the Voice from the throne answers, "They are the peacemakers, and they take the rank of sons of God."

I stand awed before this sublime spectacle. This is the noble brotherhood of peacemakers: divine because human: sons of God because brothers of men. It is through our fraternal relations that we realize the doctrine of Divine Fatherhood. The brother becomes the son and the earthly peacemaker the heavenly citizen. Why are peacemakers ranked as sons? Because they cannot be otherwise. It is not of nature that men are so distinguished; it is of grace. A man may tinker with the troubles of lower life; he may with some sort of success compose a social or industrial difficulty without an experience of that grace. And yet in social and civic concerns it is being demonstrated more and yet more that those who intervene successfully have personal knowledge of the love of God in Christ. It is the labor leader who is a disciple in the school of the Toiler of Nazareth that wins the confidence of his comrades. Working people know who is their best friend, and they call Jesus Master even though they do not call him Lord.

Let me point you once again to the serried ranks of the saints and remind you that highest among the exalted are the peacemakers. You have perhaps long been practicing this Christian

grace. Many men and women in the world are seeking to be experts in the art. To be a peace-maker is your supreme ambition. To earn this benediction is your constant aim. And you have not failed to achieve that for which you have striven. Your reward is in estrangements adjusted, in enemies made friends; and most of all in those who through your appealing intervention have entered into "the peace of God which passeth all understanding." You have won the right to rank among his children and to the love which calls you sons. Beloved! "behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

PERSECUTION IN A GOOD CAUSE

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." —*Matthew 5. 10.*

THIS verse is the more general statement of a principle which is immediately applied in the verses following. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake" is the universal maxim. "Blessed are ye" is the maxim applied. In this verse as well as in the sixth the word "righteousness" is more accurately rendered "goodness." And, as before, goodness is a larger word than righteousness. It is a more complete and symmetrical word. A man may be righteous without being good; but he cannot be good without being righteous. Goodness includes righteousness; but it is more. Goodness, in a word, is righteousness plus. The word "persecuted" requires to be looked at before we proceed. To persecute, as the derivation of the word suggests, means to pursue. It suggests the idea of unresting hostility, of hunting from place to place. The victim has no peace. He is chased and chastised relentlessly. And our Lord says that when he is pursued for goodness' sake, the kingdom of heaven is his. There is probably no bene-

diction which so easily commends itself to the judgment as this, and no beatitude which is more readily understood. There is no need to dig beneath the surface; its meaning is patent to us all.

The persecuted for righteousness' sake—who were they in the early church, and who are their modern representatives?

The disciples themselves were persecuted; indeed, their careers were one long catalogue of persecutions, and tradition has it that two at least suffered death by martyrdom. After the stoning of Stephen, James remained in Jerusalem. His very position spelled peril and led to his undoing. It is said that his witness for Christ immediately before his execution was so powerful that his executioner became conscience stricken, was converted on the spot, and that another had at once to be secured to do the bloody deed. So also there is a tradition that Peter, after the resurrection, met his Lord outside the city walls on the great Appian Way. Sudden and unexpected was the meeting, and Peter fell upon his knees exclaiming, *"Domine, quo vadis?"*—"Whither art thou going, Lord?"

"I go to die a second time for a disciple who escaped and is free."

And Peter said, "Not so, Lord: I will return and die."

And he was crucified with his head downward

at his own request because he was not worthy to die after the pattern of his Master.

The Acts of the Apostles are replete with similar records. Indeed, all along the line of history there are records of persecutions for political and religious opinions. Roman emperors persecuted the Christians. Ten of them, including Nero, Marcus Aurelius, and Maximinius, were relentless in their persecution of the first disciples of our Lord. Some sects were completely wiped out; and often, when this was not accomplished, the utmost cruelty prevailed. The story of the life and death of the saintly Polycarp is invested with age-long charm for all who love these early followers of Christ. It was in Smyrna that he met his death. Betrayed by a servant-boy whom he had befriended, he was offered life on condition of his recanting. But he refused to buy it at such a cost. "Eighty and six years," said the aged saint, "have I served him, and he hath done me no wrong: how, then, shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?" The fagots were kindled, and he went home to God in a chariot of fire.

In broad outline the history of the Inquisition is well known to many of you here. Heresy and other offenses were summarily dealt with by the Roman Church. Indeed, all national religions have a tendency to become tyrannical; and the

peril of a church which enjoys immunity from popular control is that of imagining that it is the one and only church. The Spanish Inquisition was perhaps the severest expression of the order, and cruelties effected under its administration are among the worst that history has on record. As its proceedings were for the most part conducted with closed doors, the world will never know the depths of infamy to which it often sank. When the delinquent was, for personal or public reasons, disliked by the authorities, he was often tortured to secure a confession which should never have been made. To such lengths did persecution advance in order that the faith that was in favor might triumph and abound.

But England, the land of my birth, has often been blood-guilty; and we in America cannot forget our ancestry. We think of the Pilgrim Fathers who, because liberty of conscience was denied to them, braved the perils of the deep, and laid the foundations of their holy commonwealth in New England, establishing a Christian kingdom which to-day is bounded by the Atlantic on the East, and the Pacific on the West; and we glorify God in them.

We think of the Two Thousand who were ejected from their homes and from their ministries by the Act of Uniformity in 1662. Great Britain has often been called "the land of the

free," yet through much tribulation she has achieved her present liberty. Dr. John Owen would not have called her "the land of the free"; nor would Philip Henry, the father of the world's great commentator; nor would Dr. Samuel Annesley, the father of Susanna Wesley, and the grandfather of the founder of the great Methodist Church; nor would Richard Baxter, the author of the *Reformed Pastor,* and the *Saints' Everlasting Rest.* These heroes were all evicted under the Act of Uniformity. See Richard Baxter in his old age! He is on his trial for failing to conform. "My lord," said the veteran preacher, "I have often been blamed by Dissenters for speaking respectfully of Bishops." "Richard, thou art an old knave," exclaimed the judge, "but by the grace of God Almighty I will crush you all." Why were these scenes of turbulence enacted? Because the heroes of faith in the seventeenth century refused to accept the doctrines which are being propounded by many Anglo-Catholics to-day. They believed in a Protestant Church which could justify its existence only by preaching and practicing Protestant principles.

But let it not be thought that the Roman Church is the only church which has sought to propagate through persecution the principles for which she stands. There have been times when

Protestantism has endeavored with almost equal ruthlessness to enforce its edicts. The Copernican system of astronomy was more offensive to Luther and Melanchthon than to the Romanists themselves. Mohammedanism has won its way with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other. The wholesale slaughter of the Armenians in Asia Minor is one of the blackest pages in the history of our century; and had not a cowardly prudence restrained the Protestant countries of Europe, the sufferings of this persecuted people would long ago have been brought to an end. Indeed, the history of the Christian Church from the beginning to the present day provides conclusive proof that the spirit of persecution is not dead, and that on occasion it needs only a spark to kindle a disastrous conflagration. And yet, in the main, persecution now wears other garbs and works to other issues.

The Methodist movement stimulated the spirit of persecution in a measure which reminds us of the great persecutions of the seventeenth century. Evangelical revivals always awaken the resentment of those who are otherwise minded. The early history of the Salvation Army, like the early history of Methodism, abounds in incidents of menace and misprision. The prints of Wesley at Wednesbury, mobbed by a hostile crowd, are still to be seen in Methodist homes in England. The

crowd, fickle as it was furious, surrounded the house where he stayed, cried at first: "Bring out the minister! We will have the minister!" But Wesley's presence, here as in so many other cases, was almost mesmeric in its influence, and the rabble fell back as he faced it. Wesley's simple comment is, "After a few sentences exchanged between me and the ringleader, the lion was become a lamb." Then another mob, fiercer than the first, assailed him. Twice his assailants struck him in the mouth, and the blood flowed freely. His testimony is, "I felt no more pain from the blow than if I had been touched with a straw." Many of Wesley's helpers were haled before the magistrates and not a few were thrust into the insanitary dungeons of that period. John Nelson, one of his doughtiest lieutenants, said, indeed, "I see that there is neither law nor justice for a man that is called a Methodist." The days of physical violence are over, but Methodists have often suffered indignities in our own day. Established churches have not always regarded with favor those who, according to their standard, are unauthorized and free. In America, where religious equality is no longer an open question, we have no ecclesiastical handicap, but in England it is still otherwise. The spirit of tolerance, it is true, exists in larger measure than in former days. The sky is brighter and the air is warmer, but the

icebergs are not all melted, and there are still conquests to be achieved. Physical persecution, the menace of mobs, are for the most part a thing of the past, but the spirit of persecution still survives. When churches cease to compete, and join hands for the greater good of the nations, the millennium will not be far distant. Persecution has at times sprung up outside the churches altogether, but it has usually originated within her borders and has been fostered by the spirit of exclusiveness which has claimed for itself immunity from interference, and relegated its rivals to the uncovenanted mercies of God.

To-day persecution assumes other forms and works to other issues. Ecclesiastical barriers still divide; the *odium theologicum* is not yet dead and done with. Current controversies show to what lengths our modern religious zealots would have gone if they had lived in other days and amid other influences. The gibbet, the screw, and the stake are surely not much worse than the offensives that have in these latter days been launched by the extreme wing of theological disputants against those of another mind. Loyalty to truth does not demand that we should ostracize those who do not see it from our angle of vision. Loyalty to Christ does not necessitate the utter repudiation of those who cannot all at once sound the depths of his unique and glorious personality.

The danger of extremism is that of being too extreme. Fundamentalism may be too fundamental, and modernism too modern: so that fundamentalism becomes hard, arid, intolerant, while modernism becomes haughty, exclusive, and insolent. Fundamentalism needs an infusion of modernism: and modernism an infusion of fundamentalism. The fundamentalism which insists on the crossing of every "t" and the dotting of every "i" as necessary to the Christian doctrine of inspiration has to ignore the great scholars of this and every age; the modernism which dethrones God from his place in the universe and calls Jesus merely the crown and flower of the human race, strips God of his authority and the Son of his divinity. There can be no fundamentalism which excludes modernism and no modernism which excludes fundamentalism. I know that the middle course brings down upon the head of him who advocates it the anathemas of the extremists on either side. But our first aim should be to get at the truth, and even though it awakens no enthusiasm, to say boldly that the exclusive possession of the truth is with neither of the disputants, but is the partial possession of both. Above all things let us incarnate the Christian spirit; and whether it be obstinacy on the one hand or arrogance on the other, let us seek to cast out either by showing another and a

better way. Our theology will be measured by its efficiency, and our doctrine of Christ by the reproduction of his teaching in our lives.

But, after all, the majority of us have persecutions of another sort to face. The violent assaults of those who do not affect to be other than our enemies are for the most part a thing of the past. Most of us are not engaged in theological controversy; in point of fact, we are not much interested in it. Those who wield these weapons of war do us great disservice, for we cannot understand the things at issue, and we have no instruments to help us to decide them. We are not savants or scholars or experts in the arts of understanding; we are simple folk who are seeking to know the mind of Jesus Christ, and are content to be counted his disciples if only we are allowed to follow the light which he shall give us. But we are not exempt from persecution. We have to maintain our testimony amid surroundings that are not always congenial. We have to hold the fort amid the jeers and gibes of those who are no friends to grace, for we cannot hide our light under a bushel. We are Christians, and we cannot pretend to be other than we are. To dissemble, to conceal our real selves would be rank dishonesty. We are soldiers in the army of Christ; we wear his uniform, and the whole world must know that we are loyal in our alle-

giance to him. It is when we declare ourselves that we attract antagonism. If you would get through the world with the ease of nonresistance, all you have to do is to be unprovoking, pleasant, passive. But the moment you show your colors others will show theirs. And, really, I think the petty persecutions which young people have to endure from those who are of another mind are harder to bear than the fierce onslaughts of the out-and-out antagonist. For those who suffer from open persecution are accounted martyrs, and have the martyr's halo round their heads: but the victims of petty spite—the martyrs of the store and of the shop—are often pursued with a relentlessness which is none the less intense because it is unseen. The cruellest persecution to-day is not inflicted by weapons but by words. Desertion at the crucial moment, treachery from one whom we trusted implicitly—surely there is nothing that is worse to bear than this. Persecution wears a many-colored coat: and if we have eyes to see we shall be able to discover it. Do not, however, imagine that it is always inflicted amid spectacular surroundings. It is often garbed in homelike attire and it does its deadly work under the auspices of the trivial round and the common task. The psychology of persecution is not quite so easy to understand as persecution itself. But I think that on general principles it is to be found in the

character of the persecuted. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for goodness' sake," is the accurate rendering of the text; in other words, it is goodness that awakens persecution. How true this is to life! We none of us like to be disadvantaged by our fellows. We can admire them as long as they do not put us in the shade, but when they show up our defects and deformities they show up our dislikes as well. It is easy to admire goodness so long as it appears in the abstract—and even in the concrete if it does not invite comparison. But personal character cannot long be passive: it is an aggressive, energetic agency. The saint shames me if I do not emulate the example which he sets. Goodness is not glass-house virtue: it is something out in the open which every one may see. It casts its searchlight into every corner, and reveals the hidden things of the heart in their unashamed repulsiveness. If I am living in daily contact with goodness, it either betters me or makes me worse. The live-and-let-live policy has no place in the program of goodness; it compels attention and rests content with nothing short of converts. When the multitude cried concerning our Lord in the tumult which preceded his death, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him," the evangelist tells us that it was "for envy" that they delivered him up. Christ has often been crucified afresh since

then. Incarnate goodness has received the nails into its hands and the spear thrust into its side, and the explanation has ever been the same: "For envy they delivered him." Goodness when it fails to win us worries us. Like salt it is the savor of life unto life or of death unto death.

We must see to it, however, that when we are persecuted it is *for goodness' sake.* Our motives must be pure. We must not seek persecution in order to be made martyrs. The martyrdom is an accident of persecution; it is not of the essence of it. Persecution is not endured in order to obtain the conqueror's chaplet; it is endured *for goodness' sake.*

Goodness is the occasion of persecution in the case of the disciple, and it is "for goodness' sake" that he must endure it. Persecution has often been brought upon us by our own folly. There are some good people who are persecuted, not for goodness' sake, but because of their eccentricities, their indiscretions, their folly of action or of attitude; such follies have roused others to righteous resentment. We are not to court persecution for persecution's sake, but for goodness' sake.

What are the qualities necessary to win the reward of the text?

(*a*) Courage. Weymouth has translated the text: "Blessed are those who have borne persecu-

tion in the cause of righteousness, for to them belongs the Kingdom of the heaven." They have borne persecution: they have put their shoulder to the cross, and have carried it courageously. Some of them have lacked physical courage, but they have been heroes and heroines none the less. If the deeds done in the body are ever published, it will be found that moral courage has often asserted itself where physical courage has been wanting. The true heroes are men like Robert Hall, the great British preacher, who was often prostrated with paroxysms of pain, but carried himself at all times with heroic self-possession. "I suffered much," he would exclaim when the worst was over, "but I hope I did not cry out." Such heroes bite the lip, and though the cross staggers by reason of its weight, they still press forward. They are never self-complacent: they do not advertise their heroism by counting their adventures or by recalling the perils of the pilgrimage. They have learned to suffer and be strong. That is the secret of it all. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." It is a great thing to bear persecution, to carry the cross courageously. It is still greater to bear it for goodness' sake.

Into this Gethsemane some of you have been plunged. For goodness' sake you too are suffering. You do not complain about it. Your faith

does not fail: your courage is not eclipsed. Like Jesus Christ himself you take the cup of trembling into your hands and you drink it to the dregs.

"Father, let this cup pass! He prayed, was heard;
What cup was it that passed away from him?
Sure not the death cup now filled to the brim!
There was no quailing in the awful word,
He still was King of kings, of Lords the Lord:
He feared lest in the suffering waste and grim
His faith might grow too faint and sickly dim."

To win the reward of the text courage is called for; we must not shirk the burden. We must not shrink from the appalling mystery. Courage is a divine enduement, and is to be had for the asking. Christ fortifies us for the day of persecution, and turns our testing into triumph. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." We must not whine or whimper. We must put a cheerful courage on: we must take up our cross and follow Christ.

(*b*) Charity. We must love our enemies, and pray for them which despitefully use us and persecute us. The reward of the text is not for those who harbor resentments. There is no place here for the man who wants to get on even terms with the offender. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was the maxim of

the Mosaic law, but it has no message for you and me. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. We live under a broader and a brighter sky. If we are to reap the reward of those who suffer for goodness' sake, we must breathe the atmosphere of peace among men in whom he is well pleased. We must cultivate an optimistic temper. We must have large hopes of men, and believe that the best is yet to be. We must especially choose and cherish all things good—the forgiving spirit, the love that will not let go those who have pursued us. We must also bear in mind that to resent injuries is to injure ourselves still more. The deepest wounds of the soul are always self-inflicted. The persecutor has, after all, small power. His range is very limited, and the real treasures of the heart he cannot touch. Do not magnify his office so as to invest it with undue importance. Persecution is like vaulting ambition: it so often "overleaps itself and falls on t'other side." Revenge is a Swordsman who often falls upon his own sword. Persecution is hoist with its own petard. Bear persecution but bear no grudge against the persecutor. Your enemy is your friend; he opens for you the gates of the kingdom of heaven.

He opens them here; the kingdom is being established now. Dean Inge says that we shall have to alter our ideas of distance and dimen-

sion; that we shall have to get rid of the notion that heaven is above and that hell is below the earth. Well, let us get rid of the notion now. The kingdom of heaven is here. No doubt a rich reward awaits these heroes of faith in the future. But they do not need to wait until they enter into that blissful state. They may have it here and now: the rewards are being handed out to-day. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." Yes, and in our youth, our manhood, our advancing years. The kingdom of heaven is being set up to-day upon the earth: and it may at this moment become ours if we will be but loyal to its King. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

THE BEATITUDE OF THE UNPOPULAR

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."—*Matt. 5. 11, 12.*

THESE verses are a practical application of the principles involved in the verse preceding them. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," is the announcement of a general principle. The beatitude concerns all those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. But general principles must be applied, or they are not even general principles. General principles are, in point of fact, arrived at from individual instances. What is the immediate instance which illustrates and enforces this general principle? The immediate instance is the disciples themselves. "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

I am glad we have this application of the ethics

of persecution. We often fail in the application. This is especially true of us preachers. We expound the truth; we illustrate it, and the more clearly we can make it stand out on the dark background of human life the better is it for those to whom we preach. There is no successful preaching which is not applied.

The preachers of a bygone generation were often elementary in their exegesis, but they were mighty in application. Jonathan Edwards was terrific in his appeals, and in quite another way Henry Ward Beecher and Phillips Brooks brought home those truths which they proclaimed with a mighty impact on the conscience. So too Joseph Parker, and Alexander Maclaren, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon. All these were preachers of differing theologies. But they had what matters most—deep convictions concerning the things of which they spoke, and their conviction gained momentum as they drove home the truth.

This has been called "The Beatitude of the Unpopular," and I fancy that as we examine it we shall be able to justify the title. Now, popularity is a specious kind of gift. It does not rank with the great prizes which are conferred on men. It stands in relation to other gifts as sweets do to a dinner! Sweets crown the other courses, but a dinner of sweets would be disastrous. So popularity has its place, and if popularity comes with-

out the sacrifice of principle, it is not a gift to be despised. It may at any rate be an instrument of service. It may give us the ear of the heedless and the hearts of the unconcerned. But there are times when in the pursuance of duty we may become unpopular. Public men of principle nearly always have a set-back at some time in their histories. Read the lives of the statesmen who stand out conspicuously in the achievements of America and Great Britain. Scarcely one of them has had a career of undisturbed prosperity. In this country it has been especially so. It has taken a half century to see Abraham Lincoln in his true perspective. Woodrow Wilson within the space of ten years was at the top and at the bottom of the ladder. William Ewart Gladstone championed Home Rule for Ireland, and that championship cost him the leadership of his party and the loss of many of his friends. What he stood for has since been conceded, but he was in his grave for over two decades before the seed which he planted began to appear above the ground. Unpopularity has often clouded careers which have been inspired by noble principles. And our Lord spoke for all time when he enunciated the truth of the text. Yet there is a vital annotation to the unpopularity which is here referred to. It must be incurred in the pursuance of duty. It must have in it no base ingredients; it must be pure gold so

as to stand the close inspection of succeeding generations.

There is an unpopularity which is justly incurred. It follows upon the disclosure of unworthy motives. It is the result which inevitably follows upon a career in which self is the actuating motive. There are people who are thoroughly unpopular; and we do not pretend to sympathize with them, for we know that they have brought unpopularity upon themselves. The sure consequence of the self-seeking life is to bring upon the head of the offender the anathemas of those with whom he has to do. When men are insincere, when for long years they are discovered to be other than they seemed to be, when they have betrayed a friend or taken advantage of the unoffending, the ultimate effect is to dethrone them and relegate them to the ranks of reprobates.

There is the addendum of two qualifying considerations to the persecution of which the text affirms—"falsely" and "for my sake"—and these expressions are of paramount importance. "The Beatitude of the Unpopular" depends on how the unpopularity is incurred. It must be that the persecution is unmerited and that it is endured for the sake of Christ. You can really afford to ignore the false witness. He may give you a momentary check in your career; the clouds of defamation may for the time being make the sky

of your life seem very black, but in the end you will be vindicated. My belief in the essential justice of the world is unshaken and unshakable. False accusations have a habit of returning, like the Australian boomerang, to the feet of the accuser. And if they did not, what inner tranquillity is his who knows in his heart that he is persecuted without a cause, or that the cause is Jesus Christ himself! Our nerves are steadied and our hearts are strong and brave when we remember that we endure that which we do not deserve and that we endure it for the sake of Him who has loved us from the beginning and will love us to the end.

Now what forms does this persecution take? Three forms are mentioned here.

1. Reproach

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile you." The Revised Version translates it, as I think more happily, "Blessed are ye when men shall *reproach* you." Blessed are ye when men shall call you names, *nicknames* if you will, names that are intended to hold you up to ridicule. We have an outstanding example of what kind of reproach is here intended in the Acts of the Apostles, when we are told that "the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." "Christian" was in these early days of the church a term of reproach. The

very word is a hybrid—a cross between the Latin and Greek, the first syllable being Greek and the second a Latin termination. Those who first used the word used it in derision, and pointed to these early converts as men who followed an Adventurer, one who had aimed at Messiahship, and had thereby exposed his followers to the ridicule involved in such a folly. It was undoubtedly a party name coined by the Gentiles in order that they might affix odium and contempt to those who had enrolled themselves as conscripts of the Nazarene.

In like manner the term "Methodist" was a designation first used as a title of reproach. The undergraduates at Oxford were called "The Holy Club," of which John Wesley was the founder. It was a derisive title. The members of the Holy Club were charged with fanaticism and even with hypocrisy, but they went on their conquering way. "I do not like you being called 'a club,' " wrote John Wesley's brother Samuel; "that name is really calculated to do mischief. But the other charge of enthusiasm can weigh with none, but such as drink away their senses, or never had any; for surely activity in social duties, and a strict attendance on the ordained means of grace are the strongest guards imaginable against it." But the name which has lived to the present day is the name "Methodist." Wesley thought that the

name was the survival of an ancient sect of physicians who wrought miraculous cures by method. The Methodici and the Empirici stood in the relation of the family physicians and of quack doctors; and Methodism stands to-day for a well-ordered community which feels that it has a mission to the world. The modern Methodist is more than a disciple of method. His range of vision is circumscribed only by the five continents. He is a home missionary because he aims to be a foreign missionary; and he witnesses unto Christ "both in Jerusalem and all Judæa, and in "Samaria"—in Rockford, in the United States and Canada, "and to the uttermost part of the earth." So history has its ironies: and succeeding ages have converted terms of opprobrium into badges of distinction, and liveries of contempt into robes of honor. Persecution is often grievous in its processes, yet glorious in its results. Reproach is not the end of the chapter. "Blessed are ye when men shall *reproach* you."

2. Prosecution

Prosecution is the second form of persecution, for many authorities are convinced that the form of persecution implied here is the specific, as opposed to the more general meaning of the word in the preceding verse. "Blessed are ye when men shall prosecute you in a court of law—falsely for

my sake." I am glad that we have this application of the subject. Since our Lord's day persecution has often taken the form of prosecution. Jesus himself had a great experience of the law courts. Twice he was tried—once in the ecclesiastical and once in the civil courts: the first time before Caiaphas, the high priest, the second time before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of the province. It was the ecclesiastics who condemned him to death; it was the politicians who confirmed the condemnation. Ecclesiastics and politicians are often cruel and unscrupulous, but the great crimes of history have been committed by ecclesiastics. They were, at any rate, the arch-criminals in the prosecution of Jesus, and to them primarily was due his crucifixion.

Then the prosecution of Paul is one of the dramatic passages in the Acts of the Apostles. See him there before Felix! Hear the words of Tertullus, the prosecuting counsel. Note this lawyer's sycophancy before one of the greatest sinners in the world! "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness!" After such devilish diplomacy we are prepared for his impeachment of the great apostle. "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the

Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes; who also hath gone about to profane the Temple." Such was the lawyer's impeachment. Paul was unpatriotic—"a mover of insurrections among all the Jews." He was theologically unsafe—"a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes." He was religiously unsound—"a profaner of the Temple." He was assailed from every point of the compass, and was held up to reprobation nationally, theologically, and religiously. How did he carry himself amid such a fusillade? Just as we should have expected such an one as Paul. Tertullus bowed low and fawned upon Felix. Paul stood erect—a calm, dignified, courteous Christian. The man who is not sure of himself speaks as though he were asking for a favor: the man whose feet are on the rock does not apologize. "Blessed are ye when men shall prosecute you falsely for my sake." The early Christians were often prosecuted and judgment was pronounced against them. In the past men have been imprisoned for conscience' sake, and he would be bold who predicted that this phase of history would not repeat itself. The Salvation Army has had experience of this form of persecution. In a south of England resort some time ago these heralds of the cross were silenced for disturbing the after-dinner slumbers of its privileged inhabitants. You need

not court prosecution, but if it comes to you in the pursuance of duty and for the sake of Jesus Christ you need neither quake nor fear. "Blessed are ye when men shall prosecute you."

3. Slander

"Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake." "Falsely" is better rendered "falsifying." In the margin we have the word "lying." We should have thought it impossible that lying slander could ever be the channel of blessing. But we have it on our Lord's authority that it may be so regarded. Take care that there is no ground whatever for the accusation, and then possess your souls in patience. "Blessed are ye when men shall utter lying slanders against you." But woe to him who utters them! I do not envy the man who repeats any sort of slander. For there are slanders which are not wholly false. But they are slanders all the same. And slander is one of the most hateful sins. Satan himself was called "the accuser of our brethren," a slanderer, and those who are guilty of this sin are assuredly his children.

But it is not of the slanderer but of the slandered that I would speak. How many have so suffered without the semblance of justification! Evil-minded persons have given currency to a

rumor which has no foundation in fact. Or perhaps the bald facts have been stated without those qualifications in the circumstances which put a different aspect on the facts. A lady and her husband who had walked together to the city parted in a crowded thoroughfare one day. She was in tears, and an ill-speaking observer said that they had separated on bad terms. The truth was, however, that she had just heard of the loss of a very dear friend and was hurrying to the office to cable her condolences to the family so suddenly bereaved. We must beware of jumping at unwarrantable conclusions: and we must let Bengel's maxim govern us in all our judgments *"Non sine scientia, non necessitate, non amore"*—"Not without knowledge, nor without necessity, nor without love."

Doctor Weymouth has translated this sentence in vivid and picturesque phrase. "Blessed are you when they have . . . said every cruel thing about you falsely for my sake." It is as if the followers of Jesus would have to sound the deepest depths of vituperation. It is hard enough to endure a cruel thing when it is said truthfully. There are those who seem to think that it does not matter, that, indeed, it is quite right to speak a cruel thing if it is true. I utterly dissent from this conclusion. If people have made mistakes and are seeking to amend their ways, the Chris-

tian course is to leave unsaid all reference to the past; and even if they still continue to do wrong, we do not help them to the right by rehearsing the story of their faults. I do not think that as a rule people are redeemed by confronting the actual bad but, rather, by facing the possible good. And then there are the innocent who always suffer for and with the guilty, and who suffer yet more when the guilt of the guilty is truthfully set forth. We have obligations to them; we ought always to seek to make it possible for the innocent to live. It is not easy to bear the cruel thing which is true. But "every cruel thing falsely" is an ocean depth for which I have no plummet. And the followers of Jesus are here told that they will have to sound it.

Again, however, I must ask you to remember the qualifying clauses "falsely" and "for my sake." We must take care that there is no cause for the accusation. We must see to it that we have a conscience void of offense. There must be no standing ground for the enemy. The critic must not be able to find a flaw. When we are thus fortified we can face much. In the day of adversity the man of unstained innocence has the great comfort of the inner assurance. Others may conjecture; he knows. Others may seek to disturb him, but his peace with God is imperturbable. "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just."

Then there are the words "for my sake." They are the sheet-anchor of the saint. They are tenderer and more compelling than the consideration of the previous verse. There persecution is endured for righteousness or goodness sake. It is endured for an ideal. But when the persecution of the foregoing verse is amplified in those succeeding it, and the various phases of it are specified, it is no longer an ideal, it is a Person for whom it is endured: "for my sake." Our Lord draws us very near unto himself. We are no longer pupils in his school who are striving hard for an ideal: we are his dear companions, sharers in his sorrow, not merely following in his footsteps, but walking by his side as he pursues his pathway to the cross.

There is a precedent for this persecution: "for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." We belong to an illustrious family. We are of the house and lineage of those who suffer undeservedly. We are linked up to saints, apostles, and martyrs. It cheers us beyond expression to know that we are not alone. We are so human, so very apt to feel that we shall fail, that it is well for us to know that others have succeeded. We are not going to be cowards, for they have conquered. We are not going to give in, for they have won through. Some communists were arrested in England a while ago for

teaching principles which were supposed to be subversive of the government. There were about a dozen of them, and the papers said that when they stepped into the dock they seemed "glad and happy." They were being tried for devotion to an ideal. That ideal is not mine, though I shall not now debate it. The point is that they were united in a common cause, and so would stand or fall together. If one had stood alone to take his trial, his courage might have failed him, but there were a dozen of them. We have a precedent—"For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." And we have a partner—"for my sake." We follow in the wake of the saints and heroes of other generations: and we have at our side the Lord Jesus as truly present with us now as in the days of His flesh, and for Him we suffer and are strong.

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." No matter what happens, this is our motto. We have no right to be depressed. The crosses of life must not be permitted to crush us; the sorrows of life must not be allowed to obscure the effulgence of the Sun of Righteousness. We are on the winning side and we must not wear a woebegone countenance. "Great is your reward in heaven." It is royal, rich, and plenteous. Your compensations are beyond all earthly computation. And you are

not getting something for nothing. The word "reward" means a prize that has been won. There are some prizes which you cannot win. Salvation is a free gift and cannot be won. But there are others which are the reward of patience, perseverance, and endurance. And this is one of them. You are not going to be reviled for nothing. You are not going to be thrust into the law courts for nothing. You will not be cruelly slandered for nothing. The cross here will be followed by the crown there. God has a wonderful way of adjusting our affairs. The law of compensation is a Christian as well as a heathen doctrine: and you will be awarded what you have won. We are not of ourselves truly meritorious, and it is of the grace of God that these awards are made. But God is essentially equitable: and the judge of all the earth does right.

Therefore "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." "Be joyful and triumphant," as Weymouth renders it. Yours is a great cause and yours a great reward; therefore "be joyful and triumphant." Join in the singing of the "Hallelujah Chorus." "Look beyond this vale of tears to that celestial hill." You will be reproached and prosecuted and slandered here; and yet you are not victims—you are victors.

"Be joyful and triumphant, for great is your reward in heaven." Quaint old John Trapp has

translated the words, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad," "Leap and skip for joy." It is almost a redundant expression which is used to express the soul's ecstasy. The exhortation reaches the very summit of exultation. "Leap and skip for joy." Your enemies cannot really harm you. They may mutilate the body, but they cannot maim the spirit. They may incarcerate the outer man, but they cannot bind the inner man. "Be joyful and triumphant." "Leap and skip for joy."

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry.
We're marching through Emmanuel's ground
To fairer worlds on high."

SALT

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men."—*Matthew 5. 13.*

"YE"—the disciples—"are the salt of the earth." The words are linked to the Beatitudes and are manifestly intended by our Lord to be their immediate corollary. They are addressed to those who have passed through great experiences—the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The calling is one which demands special qualifications, and the qualifications demanded are enumerated in the Beatitudes. The disciples were the pioneers of a great cause, and are here addressed as men upon whom a weight of responsibility would henceforth rest. They were in the direct line of the prophets of a former dispensation. They represented the new Israel; and what the prophets were in bygone times the disciples would be in times to come. And yet they would fulfill a still greater vocation. For the successors of the

prophets would be the Christians of every age and clime: and their sphere would be the world. The words of the text, then, are emphatically prophetic. They anticipate rather than affirm. They point to possibilities rather than achievements. "Ye are the salt of the earth." This is what Israel will be when she fulfills her destiny. In point of fact, the Israel of to-day is but the seed; the full fruition rests with the future, when, enlarged, amplified, and ennobled, Israel shall have become the great community of Christians throughout the world. The text, then, is addressed to the disciples, and suggests an obvious parallel.

1. The Designation

"Ye are the salt of the earth." We are alive to the value of salt to-day perhaps as never before. And yet we have only a faint idea of its importance in the East. There, in all forms of food, it is a necessary ingredient without which life itself would be a gamble. We use it as a condiment: the Oriental uses it as a corrective. Salt renders possible food which would otherwise be impossible; and we see that Job found a redeeming quality in salt for which even we are hardly yet prepared. "Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?" Let us now trace the parallel. Salt is

(*a*) *Communicative.*

It impregnates everything it touches. It is a purifying agency. Its adaptability is one of the qualities which fit it for this work. The uses of salt are many. It is a seasoning for much of the food we eat. It is equally soluble in hot or cold water.

Its functions are as various as the forms in which it is found. It has a medicinal value which is not yet fully realized. Many of the ills to which the human flesh is heir can be dissipated by salt. It is because the water is salt that it is so much easier to swim in the ocean than in the fresh water of the river. No human being can sink in the Salt Lake of the State of Utah. The adventurous bather is borne on its waters like a toy without any effort on his part. It is said that the saltness of the Dead Sea and of the Salt Lake in Utah is due to the absence of outlet, and to the consequent formation of big bowlders of rock-salt in the bed of the lake. Salt is indeed one of the most valuable mineral assets in the world: and vast fortunes have been made by men who have bought land—in many cases for the proverbial old song—which when bored has brought untold wealth to its possessor. We cannot overestimate the value of salt.

Salt communicates itself: and you and I must do the same. Christians cannot be as though they

were not. Our very calling compels us to communicate to others that which we have received. "To do good and to communicate, forget not." It is by your communication that the world will be brought to God. It may that he will finish in a day the work which he has begun, that by some marvelous revelation of himself the whole human family will be gathered into his fold. Until the coming of that day the process of purification will be slow. It will be the process of the salt which impregnates adjacent matter. Christians have a distinct calling. It is ordained in heaven that to them should be committed the conversion of the world. To this end they are elected. Their election is for no personal end; it is altruistic. All are elected unto salvation; few are elected to privilege and power. What, then, is the explanation of the election of the few? They are chosen for the sake of the many. Abraham was elected to the friendship of God, but not for himself alone. He was elected that he might become a channel of blessing to the human race, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Salt is of priceless value, but salt is not an end in itself. Goodness is not a garden walled around; it is not sacrosanct. When it is inviolable it ceases to be goodness. It must go out into the world and seek self-expression. It can live only by loving. "This is the day which the

Lord hath made." What has he made it for? Worship, of course; and if worship has not the first place on the program, we fail to apprehend its meaning. But the Sunday is not an end in itself. It is made for the weekday, the first day for the succeeding six; Sunday is the day of election that in it all other days may be sanctified. Ruskin has finely put it: "You keep the Sabbath in imitation of God's rest: do by all means if you like, and keep also the rest in imitation of God's work." Salt is an agency of communication and it is vital only in proportion as its energy is passed on to substances other than itself.

Some of you have been elected, elected to salvation, it is true, but elected to that service which lies beyond salvation. "Ye are the salt of the earth." You are in the minority and the vast majority is on the other side. You have made inroads on the enemy's country, but there is much land still to be possessed. You will never conquer on a program of aloofness. You must establish relations; you must get into communication. Why is it that so many churches fail? They fail because they do not follow up their advantage. They do not communicate. There is no true church without fellowship. First "our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Then "we have fellowship one with another." And this is not all. The salt must com-

municate itself. We must seek to enfold in our fellowship those that are without. Christians must pass on the properties which have made them what they are. The salt must eat its way into society. You are children of privilege in order that the world may share your power. "Ye are the salt of the earth."

(*b*) *Antiseptic.*

Salt is the antidote to corruption. Of all the antiseptics which the ingenuity of man has devised salt is the least expensive and the most easily obtainable. It is used for preserving perishable articles of food, and where other and more costly antiseptics are impossible salt may be used in a variety of ways to check the tendency toward putrescence and decay. The antiseptic qualities of salt have a special significance when they are associated with the covenants of the Old Testament. "Ought yet not to know," asks Abijah, king of Judah, of Jeroboam king of Israel, "that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?" Salt sanctified the covenant, and sealed it as a lasting obligation. Salt is therefore a synonym for purity and preservation; it arrests deterioration. Now, it is to this high calling that you and I are summoned. Christians are the antiseptics of society. They prevent the world from being irretrievably cor-

rupted. We sometimes think that Christianity is making little headway: we are conscious of the startling disproportion between our achievements and the efforts we put forth. In reality the disproportion is not as great as it appears to be. You are doing a necessary work if you only prevent the world from getting worse. Churches in the centers of our cities often seem to fight a losing battle, but their success is not to be appraised by schedules. Every church that serves the community at the center and that stands for both spiritual and social redemption, should expect to be worked at a loss. It cannot pay its way. Remedial work is always costly, and those who are socially redeemed can never liquidate the cost of their redemption. The cost ought to be borne by the wealthier churches in the suburbs which are, for the most part, immune from such obligation. I would not close any city church unless I could replace it by another. We often pay the price in pagan populations for abandoning the center for the suburbs. The citadels of evil are at the center of our cities. And the church is an antiseptic which prevents that which is bad enough from becoming worse. And what is true of city churches is true of all. These spires and towers are silent witnesses for God. It is impossible to pass through such thoroughfares as this without being reminded that "God's

in his heaven." The influence we exercise is not arithmetical; figures cannot reveal the work we do. Our instruments of service are not spectacular; they are spiritual, but we cannot define the spiritual in terms of the material. We may not be able to chronicle a great advance. It is meritorious, however, to hold the fort. To repel the enemy without surrendering the stronghold is oftentimes a great exploit. Do not be captivated by what the world calls success. The real success is to do your duty by God and man a day at a time, and to leave the results with him. " 'Tis not in mortals to command success. But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it." How true this is of the sphere of Christian service! Success is in the effort and only remotely in the achievement. If you ward off the aggressor without winning the victory, you may be doing great things for the Kingdom. God is your Judge and he finds merit in the motive. You are the antiseptics of society, and you save it from itself. "Ye are the salt of the earth."

(*c*) *Sacrificial.*

The salt of sacrifice cannot be omitted in an explanation of this passage. As salt was used to ratify a covenant, so it was used in the sacrificial feast that crowned the covenant. It suggested the incorruption of the sacrifice, the moral significance of which could be reflected only in the

purity of those who offered it. The companion passage in Mark at once occurs to us: "For every one shall be salted with fire." "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another." Differing interpretations of this passage have been given, but certain lessons lie upon its very surface. It teaches us that in order to salvation purification must be continually going on. "Every one shall be salted with fire" reminds me that the purgatorial fires of self-discipline are needed now if we would escape the fire of future retribution. We must submit ourselves to the exacting ordeal now if we would avoid that which is more exacting. We must apply the corrective here if we would escape the curse there. The teaching seems to be that no restrictions are too rigid, that no flagellation is too painful, if only we may make our calling and election sure. We regard the Roman ritual as to hair shirts and fasts and continuous genuflexions with good-natured disdain, but let us see to it that the pendulum does not swing too far the other way. "Every one shall be salted with fire," says Jesus Christ; and if this is true, much of what modern Christianity stands for will not pass muster. Have we not moved far away from this ideal? Inscribe this sentence on the portals of most churches, and you would empty them. It is not

necessary to make a fetish of this or any other verse in order to say that Christianity is sacrificial and that where it fails of that ideal it fails completely. We must go to great lengths in self-discipline if we would be saved. We must be prepared to part with that which we prize most in order to our purification. "Living sacrifices" mean the crucifixion of the lower self. We must die in order to live: and we must be buried with our base desires if we would rise to that everlasting life which is not touched by death. We need not be literalists in order to appreciate the significance of that drastic injunction of our Lord, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched." We may be untouched by the vivid realism of his utterance, and yet feel that there is something unspeakably solemn in their application to ourselves. Fire cleanses as well as burns. Let us seek the cleansing now. The future is veiled in mystery and we cannot fathom the meaning of such words as these, but we know that the "acceptable sacrifice" can only be offered now, and that rigid self-judgment here alone will screen us from the judgment of the Judge hereafter.

I will not dwell at length upon the thought that salt is the symbol of concord. "Have salt in your-

selves and be at peace with one another." Orientals regard the eating of each other's salt as a sign of enduring friendship. The salt of sacrifice will purge us of all self-seeking. We shall look "not upon our own things but upon the things of others." And when we rise to that height our sordid ambitions will be atrophied, and our vanities will vanish: and we shall enter into the meaning of that spiritual altruism "in honor preferring one another, by love serve one another."

2. The Deterioration

"If the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men."

They are searching, solemn words. We are told that pure salt cannot lose its savor and that the loss is due to the mingling of baser elements. I suppose it would be true to say that perfect Christians cannot fall, but how far removed from that ideal we all are! There are conflicting elements within us. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde have their counterparts in each of us, and there is quartz among the gold. Anyhow, it is attested on every side that salt may become insipid, and that the pungent condiment may lose its seasoning power. And when that happens—what? "It is

thenceforth good for nothing." Some apparently useful things can be made over again: rags can be redeemed, junk has oftentimes a market value, but savorless salt cannot be renewed. "It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." The salt that has lost its savor prefigures the doom of the derelict. There is no redemption for the man who is past redeeming, and "the corruption of the best is the worst."

History abounds in illustrations of the salt which has lost its savor. There are men and women everywhere who answer to this tragic symbol. Once they reminded us, in their purifying activities, of salt at its best. But that day is gone and now they remind us of salt at its worst. There is nothing more pathetic than the spectacle of men once on the pinnacle of prosperity but who have fallen past recovery. I have known those who counted for much in the community overwhelmed by disaster, once kings in the commercial world who in later years have been a care to others. I have known those whose word was once a law to which men and women alike paid homage, but the exponents of a new policy have arisen and the ancients have lost their hold—in some cases it was a strangle hold—and they have been swept like chaff before the wind. So in other walks of life. Churches once the

Mecca of pilgrims from many lands have become ecclesiastical museums with reminders of the past but with no inspirations for the present. Ministries once miraculous in their effectiveness have lost the power which once they wielded. Nations which seemed essential to the progress and prosperity of the world have fallen back; the crown which they once so proudly wore has been wrested from them by the rival hands of those who wear to-day what they have in turn competed for and won. Cities once the centers of all that is best in the world of literature, art, and science have been left behind and have surrendered to others that primacy which for so many years was theirs. Babylon is fallen, and Rome is gone to pieces. London, New York, and Chicago are now the mistresses of the commercial world. But one of the most certain things in life is its uncertainty, and he would be bold to prophesy the continuance of any which to-day are at their height. Communities are permitted to continue only by the favor of God and the character of the people. When the first is withdrawn and the second fails, their doom is not far distant.

But our chief concern is with ourselves. Cities, nations, empires, commonwealths, churches are but aggregated units; and the remedy is ever with the individual. We must be salted before we can be as salt to others. Our achievements are what

we are. We cannot rise above ourselves, and our accomplishments are the measure of our personal attainments. Let us, then, follow on to know the Lord. Let us cultivate all that is best in character. Let us cleave closer and closer to Jesus Christ. Then we shall be qualified for service in that kingdom which is his by right and which he has purchased with his most precious blood.

LIGHT

"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—*Matthew 5. 14-16.*

THE two figures salt and light occur in juxtaposition, and the teaching of each is supplementary to that of the other. The action of salt is secret. Generally speaking, it does its work out of sight. That of light is manifest. Salt, then, reminds us of the corporate body of Christians; it regards primarily the inner estate; light speaks of their outward relations. At the best, however, ours is but a borrowed glory. We do not generate light; we reflect it. Christ alone is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." We are mirrors set in such a position of advantage that we can reflect onto the world the light we have received. Now, it is here assumed that the world needs that light; that, in other words, apart from the light which shines from us who profess the faith of Jesus Christ, the world would be in darkness. It is one of the

inscrutable mysteries of Providence that God has made the progress of his kingdom to depend so much upon our co-operation. When we fail, this great cause is retarded: when we are faithful, it advances. That the Kingdom should depend on our devotion has often been used as a weapon against it in the hands of unbelief. Is it possible, men have asked, that the noblest institution the world has ever seen should be at the mercy of the imperfect men and women who profess adherence to it? The answer is that the ultimate triumph is beyond the shadow of a doubt, since this Word of God is true, Christ "must reign till he hath put his enemies under his feet." But the advance of his kingdom may be checked by the church, and by those who as individuals compose the church. God has committed to his church the task of winning the world for him. It is a great mystery, but ours is a religion of mysteries; and, indeed, religion without mysteries would be no religion at all.

It is a position of distinction to which we are called. "Ye are the light of the world." Such a designation alters the perspective of life. We can never be the same after we have been so described. Henceforth the eyes of the world will be turned toward those who are the repositories of its light. We cannot live as though none were looking at us. We have now become the objects

of the public searchlight. Things that are lawful in others, and may be lawful in ourselves, may not be expedient. We are expected to live above reproach, to carry ourselves so as not to cause the little ones in the household of faith to stumble. We have been appointed to our spheres in life, and we must see to it that we do justice to the obligations which Christ has imposed upon us. We are not flung onto the world anyhow, as though it did not matter where we located ourselves or how we lived. A definite course is marked out for us. We are distinctly told what we ought to be. There is no confusion in the affairs of the Kingdom. Christ has a method of his own and the conditions of discipleship are clearly laid down. Our way is prescribed for us and our work is appointed. We are not at liberty to pick and choose and we must do as we are told.

We are expected to be true to ourselves, to our own genius and gifts, but to the general principles of the Kingdom we are called to render unquestioning obedience; and this is one of them: "Ye are the light of the world."

Turn with me, then, to this text, and let us lay to heart the lessons which it teaches. The description of the individual Christian and of that corporate body of Christians which form the church reminds us of our

1. Prominence

"Ye are the light of the world." "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid."

There is no obscurity for us after this. We are bound to occupy the commanding positions. Our sphere is first our own community, then the world. It is futile for men to say that we must circumscribe our efforts to those spheres of service which others have assigned to us. Christ has plainly told us that his kingdom is without frontiers, and that our light is to shine in every land. The mandate for Christian missions is again by implication given us here. We are not to put the light of the world into a dark lantern, but on a candlestick, that its bright beams may be diffused. The light must shine in our own homes and churches, but it must travel further afield. It must be as "a city set on a hill which cannot be hid." The city on the top of the hill is bound to be seen. No other building can obscure it; no other spectacle can compete with a sight so glorious. Our light must penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, and the dark places which are full of cruelty must be reclaimed and redeemed.

The church, then, has to do with the state. It is her duty to illumine it. Christianity and internationalism cannot be divorced. It is because our Christianity has been mostly academic that so

many cataclysms have fallen upon the nations in the present generation. We have divorced Christianity from those ethics which are of such paramount importance to the well-being of the world. It is because statesmen will not let Jesus Christ reign that society is shivered into splinters. Our denominational and theological controversies become a scandal at a time when we ought to be getting together as churches, with the common aim in view of securing disarmament and of hastening the advent of the day when war shall be no more. The present condition of the world is a sad commentary on the failure of the churches to diffuse the light they have received. Is there one among us who would for a moment seriously contend that war could not be completely abolished if the churches were united in a program for its abolition? Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, in his erudite work *Christianity and the State,* has uttered eloquent words which must awaken a response in the hearts of all who care for the coming of the Kingdom. "There can be no moral or spiritual growth in nations till the causes of war are abolished by a united Christian consciousness. All churches should organize and act for this end. They are in honor bound to proceed against the 'peace of violence' which is based upon armaments. It is their duty to ask for the withdrawal of armies of occupation, and of absurd claims and

impossible indemnities. They should require the political authorities of their respective nations to define and codify international law, and by its means make covenants which substitute arbitration for combat in the disputes of Christian nations."[1] Some advance has been made toward this ideal since Doctor Cadman gave the world this epochal advice. But there is much yet to be achieved, and it rests with the churches to join hands in promulgating these elemental ideas of the Christian faith. The church in union can bring statesmen to their knees. It is our divided councils which have brought to nought the Christian ethic. "Ye are the light of the world."

What are the qualities that contribute to the prominence of Christians and of that church of which we form a part?

(*a*) *We are experimentalists.*

We have received the light and it shines from out the citadels of our souls. Many speak about the light, but they speak of it from the outside. They discuss it as they would a problem in geometry; they examine it as they would a scientific discovery. They have knowledge, but it is of the head; it is not of the heart. If your light is to shine, it must shine from within. You must yourself know Christ with that heart-knowledge

[1] *Christianity and the State*, by S. Parkes Cadman. Reprinted by permission of The Macmillan Company, publishers.

which spells salvation. Christianity is a unique system, and no wonder that unbelief should set itself to plunder its treasures. Morality is not Christianity, it is true. But the best morals are those which emanate from Jesus Christ. You cannot dethrone him and enthrone that morality of which he is the fount and inspiration. There is no morality apart from the teachings of the Man of Nazareth. Christianity makes morality a vital thing. Just as the light is necessary to the growth of all things, so Jesus Christ is necessary to render effective the science of moral duty. We proclaim a system which will save society just because it has saved us. And if we are luminous, it is just because we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and that the light was first kindled within us by Him who is the kindler of all lights.

The moral health of the world depends on you. The absence of light spells sickness and death. You cannot maintain yourselves in physical health if you never see the sunlight. I prescribe sunlight—if I am asked for a prescription—for many of the ills to which the human flesh is heir. Plants that are kept in cellars soon droop and die. Somebody has said that light is one of the five fingers on the hand of health. All prosperous communities aggregate themselves around Christian principles, and the cities that thrive are more and more accepting the standard of the Sermon

on the Mount. Glasgow, the greatest city of Scotland, bears the impress of her love for sacred things in the motto which she has so proudly made her own: "May Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the word." The world-wide diffusion of the light is contingent on our discipleship: we are not professors merely; we are possessors; and that is the secret of our power.

(*b*) *We are propagandists.*

Of course the light cannot help shining if only you will let it shine. It is in the nature of light that it shines. But we are to shine to the greatest possible advantage. We shall not pass on undimmed the light which we have received. It is a law of transmission that light in passing through any medium loses some of its energy. The loss may be small, but the loss is there. The atmosphere modifies the ardent rays of the sun, or we should be blind. Goodness does not dazzle us with excess of light: but still, in general, the law holds good. "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" is quenched as it passes through us. Jesus is the light of the world: we also are the light of the world: but the second light is only a pale reflection of the first. Still we are the representatives of Christ. And we are sent into the world to enlighten it. What, then, must be our method? There are two ways of enlightenment—by the lip and by the life. So far as in

us lies we must be teachers of the truth. We may imagine that we have scant qualifications, but at any rate we can "bear witness to the truths we have embraced." It is an elementary gospel which this world of sinning men and women needs, and we can, at any rate, proclaim the truth which has made us free. You are not exempted from the duties of teacher simply because your knowledge is restricted. The most capable teachers are not those who have read the most; they are those who have mastered a few truths in such a way that they can make them live again in the hearts of their disciples. And the fact that you are only a junior in the school of Christ does not excuse you from the duty of helping and instructing others whose Christian education, it may be, began later than your own. You can propagate the gospel; you can diffuse the light by teaching others. But teaching is not the only medium of service. The life is more powerful than the lip. Men will read your life when they will not listen to your teaching. Make, then, your life the best that it may be. "I only look at the best pictures," said Sir Joshua Reynolds, "for the bad ones spoil my eye." But Sir Joshua was an artist, and he was one among ten thousand. Most of us look at the bad ones, and, they not merely spoil the eye but corrupt the heart. We must so far as in us lies teach the doctrine and we must

live the life if we would share effectively in witnessing for Christ. "Ye are the light of the world."

2. Peril

"Neither do men light a candle" (or a lamp), "and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

The bushel was a dry measure used in measuring corn, and the suggestion is that it would be sheer folly to be a lighted lamp under an inverted corn-measure, but that it should be placed upon the lamp-stand, the high receptacle specially provided to insure the widest possible diffusion of the light. I cannot help thinking that our Lord had in mind the peril of allowing the light to be obscured. I seem to hear behind the actual words of the text, the injunction: "Take care that you do not hide the light. You have received it: now pass it on." "Take up the torch and wave it wide, the torch that lights time's thickest gloom."

Not a few have yielded to the temptation to conceal the light. They have been content with the blessings which have come to them: they have not troubled to communicate that which they have received. The peril is that men will light a lamp and put it under a corn-measure, and so they will

neutralize the best by balancing it over against the worst. Self-centered Christianity has in it the seeds of its own disintegration. It is a contradiction in terms and has the sentence of death within itself. A church that cares only for its own congregation, without regard to the perishing world, has already entered upon the downward course. All churches are in danger from such causes. Without intending to repudiate the program of aggressive Christianity it is easy to forget the world-service which she is called to undertake. When the preaching satisfies the congregation, and the music is attractive, and the fellowship is easy and acceptable, the church may soon degenerate into a club, with no message to the unsaved at home and no mission to the heathen abroad. The churches of North Africa forgot their program of propagandism, and they have long since perished from off the face of the earth. The tragedy of lost opportunities is writ large in the history of Christianity. A Mohammedan mosque in Asia Minor has these words written over its archway. "Thy kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting kingdom," and just above them, in deeper lettering still, "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is his prophet." "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The peril of concealing the light is that secrecy

becomes a sort of second nature, and with secrecy duplicity is sure to keep continual company. We do not willingly acknowledge that we are hiding our lamp under a corn-measure, and we try to persuade ourselves that we are not guilty of any such impropriety. If anyone should charge us with it, our sense of wounded pride at once rises to defend us. Such indignation, however, in reality testifies that we are ill at ease, for sooner or later we judge everything from the level of the lowered lamp. That is how we are punished. We seek excuses for a course of conduct which in the early days of our discipleship would have been anathema to us. "If a man is guilty of any defection from himself," says Mark Rutherford, "of anything of which he is ashamed, everything which is better becomes a farce to him." And we know that this is true. I am speaking thus because I do not know of any peril of the present day which is more awful and imminent than this peril of hiding the lamp under a bushel. Testimony is in danger of dying out among us, and its cessation assists in the concealment of the lamp. Our modern practice of suppressing our religious convictions except in the presence of near friends contributes to the same end. The modification of ecclesiastical and theological views in order to secure uniformity may, unless we are careful, follow hard after the other two. By all

means hide your crotchets, but do not conceal Christ. Rudeness is no part of religion, but boldness is. Exalt the Saviour; lift high the flaming torch of faith. Cowardice stands self-condemned, but courage is an inspiration of the Holy One. "Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

3. Purpose

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

We are exhorted to do good by stealth, but not so stealthily as to take from God the glory which is his due. We can be humble and yet advance with a confident step bearing aloft on our banner the name of God, and seeking in our walk and conversation to magnify the grace of his dear Son. Doctor Arnold of Rugby died at forty-seven, but in less than half a century he lived a full life and revolutionized the school with which has name is so closely connected. Mr. Lytton Strachey, in his *Eminent Victorians,* tells us it was predicted by Doctor Hawkins, then provost of Oriel College, Oxford, that if Mr. Thomas Arnold was elected to the Headmastership of Rugby School he would "change the face of education all through the Public Schools of Eng-

land." That prediction was abundantly fulfilled; the secret of Arnold's imperishable influence was out of sight, for his "life was hid with Christ in God." His last recorded prayer—it was offered just before he died—was: "May I be kept humble and zealous, and may God give me grace to labor in my generation for the good of my brethren and for his glory." His Christianity was altruistic—"For the good of my brethren and for his glory." So he also "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Let your light shine that men may see your good works. More converts, says Origen, were won through the good works of the early Christians than through their preaching. And Origen spoke for all time. Your practicing will do more than your preaching, your works more than your words, toward the bringing in of the kingdom of God. So you must shine, not to be seen but to glorify God. Then let your light thus shine. The lamp on the lamp-stand supplies the analogy. As it shines upon every one in the house, so let your light shine upon your good works. I like Weymouth's translation: "Just so let your light shine before all men, in order that they may see your good deeds and may give glory to your Father who is in heaven." And in a footnote he adds Bengel's comment, "Your holy lives, not yourselves: the shining, not the candle." What

can I more say than this? No man can say a better word, so I will leave you with this refrain ringing in your ears: "Your holy lives, not yourselves; the shining, not the candle," and all, that you may "glorify your Father who is in heaven."

OUR LORD, THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."—*Matthew 5. 17.*

"THE law or the prophets"—the words are not linked together: the disjunctive word "or" separates them. Why should they be separated? Because if the law and the prophets were united we should regard them in their unity as bringing into prominence the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures. Their separation gives special emphasis to both. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, the original Old Testament Scriptures which form the five books of Moses; think not that I come to destroy the prophets, the other portions which have been added to the Pentateuch." (He might have destroyed one without destroying the other.) "I am not come to destroy either: I am come to fulfill."

Matthew's was the Gospel for the Jew, and this was a special message to his own people. Christ came with a plan of life. He knew why he was here. From Bethlehem to Calvary his purpose did not vary. No reformer was ever so consistent. Many such have been known to

change their programs. They have modified this and mangled that, and in the end they have offered the world a scheme which has been strangely divergent from the original charter. Often they have been opportunists: and even if they have not merited the opprobrium of such a designation, the compulsion of circumstances has been too much for them. They have had to surrender to the demands of their disciples. There is no surrender here. The text is a plain statement of purpose which would not be hailed by those who heard it. For I have no doubt that many of his hearers would have been glad if he had destroyed the law and the prophets, or, at any rate, had so softened their severities as to render them the more acceptable. The law is usually irksome to human nature. There is something in me which is prone to resist it. And when the Great Teacher, from whom so much was expected, begins by saying that he has only come to fulfill the law and the prophets, that in no sense is he to relax their rigid requirements, he repels at the outset the natural man. This much, then, is clear —our Lord is not come to pander to the prejudices of the human race. He offers no easy religion to compliant followers. His is not an examination in which all the candidates are sure of getting into the honors list. The gate is strait; the law looms before us in all its gloomy

forbiddingness; the prophets cry aloud with all their fierce demands, and Jesus himself will not permit them to be set aside. Herein he has established a precedent for all time. It is not by dispensing with law and order, not by the abrogation of those principles which for centuries have been the safeguard of society, that the world will be saved. Anarchy has never struck the note of construction, and only constructive policies are worth considering. Men have the right to ask you what you have to give them in place of what you take away. There must be no destruction, even in a limited sense, which is not followed by construction. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, to bring to naught the machinations of evil men. But he destroyed nothing that was good. Rather he appropriated it, and sent it forth with an enlarged sphere of operation on its errand of mercy to the world. He came to save.

Now, why did our Lord take up this attitude with regard to Jewish law? Because it had in it so much that was essential to the true development of God's chosen people. Jewish law was the best law for that stage in the history of the world. And all good law has in it some permanence. If this were the occasion, I think I could demonstrate to you that the best elements in Jewish law are to be found to-day in Anglo-Saxon law the wide world over. There is a sense in which all

good law comes to stay. It is everlasting. You can improve it, but if it is of God, no matter to what period it may belong, you cannot annul it. The Christian law is not the annulment, it is the development of the Jewish law. Indeed, development is the very life of law. You cannot have a cast-iron system for all time. The world is continually developing, and a developing law is necessary to a developing world. The adaptation of law to changed conditions is the infallible mark of statesmanship. It is by such adaptation that nations live. Rearrangements often spell a new lease of life. The Bible will never be destroyed, because its message is eternal. Some of our friends seem to fear the so-called new scholarship, but it has no destructive power such as they ascribe to it. It was said that George Adam Smith had so chopped up "Isaiah" in his world-famous commentary as to destroy the book. But the reverse has taken place. Isaiah is more widely read and understood to-day than ever before, and thousands are thanking God for the gift of the interpreter and his interpretation. So Christ did not destroy the law. What he did was to deliver it from its incrustations, to free it from its faults, to correct the errors which were due to human imperfection, and to make it a more dignified, beautiful, and effective instrument of righteousness than ever before. Before he came the law

was in danger of becoming a dead letter. After he appeared it became a living spirit. Morality was invested with a new life and became radiant with a new glory. He came not to abrogate the old order, but to fulfill it. He was no Bolshevist; he settled down to the conditions of life in which he was born and made the best of them. He has been called "The Great Innovator," but his was the innovation of influence. It was not the innovation of insurrection. He obeyed his parents; he obeyed the regulations and restrictions of the humble home at Nazareth. After the superlative revelation in the Temple he returned home with his parents. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." He qualified for his Kingship by being an exemplary subject. And he stooped to conquer. And it was so in every sphere. He fulfilled the moral law. He did not rebel against the laws of his nation; he fulfilled them by laying down principles in which all Christian nations live and move and have their being. He did not abrogate the ceremonial law; he fulfilled it by his death on the cross. He did not annul the law of sacrifice; he fulfilled it. The death upon the cross was the transcendent sacrifice—"a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they." He did not set aside the Sabbath. He fulfilled it by rising from the dead, and by converting the last day of the week

into the first. The day was still the day of rest, but he rebaptized it so that henceforth it became full of a richer spiritual content than ever before. The Sabbath is now the Lord's Day, a day of rest, a day of holy enterprise, and of worship which is divine equipment for work. He came not to destroy, but to fulfill.

1. Christ Came Not to Abrogate the Law of Worship, but to Fulfill It

Wherein did the worship of the first covenant differ from that of the second? The first was material and the second was spiritual. There were many evolutionary stages in the history of worship before men arrived at the ideal which obtains with us to-day. We believe that spiritual worship was from the first the final goal. But God had his own way of teaching and training his children. And as in every other sphere so in this, they went "from strength to strength." It was through the material that they traveled to the spiritual. His ancient people built a house for him to dwell in. David would not allow that God's house should be inferior to that in which he lived. "Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains."

It was a noble resolve that David formed. God should have a house worthy of his name. I mention it, however, not as a testimony to David's sense of fitness, but as a testimony to the ideals of those who had learned their lessons in the school of Moses. In the infancy of the world God was in large measure a restricted God, to be found only in places dedicated to his worship. Material sacrifices were then offered on altars erected for that purpose. It was through the sacrifices of bulls and goats and firstlings that God was then propitiated. To the ancients he was an angry Jove, and perpetual sacrifice was necessary to appease his indignation. Now, all these symbols had an end in view. There is nothing in the evolution of history that is not related to the "far off divine event." But men are prone to pervert symbols; they stop at the letter and do not penetrate through the letter to the spirit. Ritual is religious only when it becomes the medium of spiritual perception. Most of us are not impervious to a reasonable ritual. It is only when ritual obscures the face of God that his children have no use for it. Doctor Pusey wrote one of his disciples asking him to secure for him a "discipline." Do you call to mind what a "discipline" was? It was a whip with knots and cords—five of each. It would be a very sacred character, said the Anglican saint,

because it would be a symbol of the five wounds of the Redeemer. That is not your way! it is not mine! But let us make sure that we live as near to God as Pusey did before we criticize his methods. Pusey's ritual was the vehicle of his religion, and all his symbols were spiritual and sacrificial. The danger for you and me is lest we should content ourselves with the material aspects of religion. The Jews did this. They saw with the natural eye; the spiritual eye was blind. When Christ came he saw their pitiable plight, and he announced in unequivocal terms the law of all true worship: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Spirituality and reality are the final tests of worship. If these are lacking, neither gifts nor genuflexions are passports into his presence. True worship is of the spirit. Even sacrifice is of small account if the heart be not right with God. When the heart is right, worship, service, and sacrifice inevitably follow. But it is the heart that matters most. The psalmist lived in a day when material sacrifices were in the ascendant, yet he glimpsed the greater truth: "Thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."

Is the ordinance of Christian worship as binding upon us as it was upon God's ancient people? Let us frankly face the fact that it has not been abrogated. Our Lord has delivered it from the meticulous observances of that former day. He has freed it from the cumbrous ritual which at that time obtained. But the gracious obligation "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is" has never been relaxed. It is well that we should have that obligation in constant memory. These are testing times for public worship. They are not less testing for the preacher. The man of the preaching gift is finding that it takes him all his time to hold his congregation, while the average man is often faced by a wilderness of empty pews. The religion of not a few begins and ends with the radio. At first we rejoiced because that great invention brought comfort and inspiration to invalids at home, converting the sick chamber into a veritable Bethel, and enabling its occupant to share in the service of the sanctuary. But does it not bid fair to multiply the absentees, recruiting the army of the sick by regiments of the robust, men and women who are dupes of the casuistry which affirms that the assembling of yourselves is of no account if only the name of God is heard? But they contravene the teaching of the text, for Christ came not to destroy the

ordinances of worship but to give them an ampler meaning. He came to eliminate the material and to emphasize the spiritual. The obligations of public worship have never been annulled. You are needed in God's house not for your own sakes —though the personal aspect cannot be ignored— but for the sake of others to whom your presence is a help and inspiration. You may be a fountain of delight to many a fellow pilgrim, for true brotherhood is always and everywhere a benediction. Christ came not to abrogate the law of worship, but to fulfill it.

2. Christ Came Not to Abrogate the Moral Law, but to Fulfill It

Turn to this present chapter for illustrations of this theme.

(*a*) *There is the law of murder.*

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Christ does not abrogate the law of murder; he enlarges its scope. "Killing is murder, we are all agreed upon that," says our Lord in effect. "But causeless anger is murder of another sort." Anger is emotional murder; killing is physical murder. Now, according to

the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount the intention ranks with the act, the desire to destroy with the deed. "Anger is madness" was one of the earliest sentences for translation in my Latin Primer: and we know how true to fact that sentence is. Anger is a volcanic upheaval of the emotions: and when it gets beyond control it stands in the dock side by side with murder. Christ did not abrogate the law of murder: He amplified it. Murder and anger are henceforth blood-relations bearing the marks of a common origin and intent on a common purpose.

(*b*) *There is the law of personal purity.*

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Christ does not abrogate the law of personal purity: here again he enlarges its scope. Unchastity in the act is condemned of course. Few will contest that. It is one of the axioms of social morality. The law of chastity is recognized as of universal obligation. It is often violated, but the libertines who violate it will not, unless they are hopelessly abandoned, vote for its repeal. Men who break this law will not vote for its annulment, because so many have mothers, sisters, daughters. Unchaste actions are reprobated everywhere. But Christ goes

further than the moralists who were before him. He condemns unchastity in the heart as well as in the action. The impure thought, the lustful look are alike invasions of the moral law. Henceforth impurity of heart and impurity of act are blood relations, and the condemnation of one must inevitably fall upon the other.

(*c*) *There is the law of oaths.*

"Again ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." "But I say unto you, Swear not at all." The injunction is a plea for truthfulness, straightforwardness. It anticipates the day when trickery in word and deed will be a thing of the past, and every man's word will be his bond. But this precept as used by Christ goes further still. It protests against the cursing and swearing which were common in those times. "This people," says Thomson, in the *Land and the Book,* "are fearfully profane. Everybody curses and swears when in a passion. No people that I have ever known can compare with these Orientals for profaneness in the use of the names and the attributes of God. The evil habit seems inveterate and universal." Christ does not abrogate the law of oaths; he fulfills it. The law against swearing falsely still holds good. But that law is enlarged so as to include an injunc-

tion against swearing profanely. Falsehood and profanity are blood relations. And they fall together under the withering weight of our Lord's condemnation.

(*d*) *There is the law of retaliation.*

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." There is no need to degrade these words by a grotesque literalism. You have often heard this text quoted by flippant vendors of biblical snippets, and smothered with loud laughter at the end. But the true interpretation goes far below the surface. The law of Moses allowed reciprocity in respect of injuries, but it fixed the limits. "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Why are the boundary lines so clearly defined? Because vengeance always desires to go beyond them. Men are never satisfied with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. They want the two eyes and all the teeth! Vengeance clamors for the blood of the offender. So the law of Moses said, "Thus far and no further—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But Jesus says that private vengeance is a sin, and under the humorous figure of the smitten cheek He plainly tells his followers that it must never be allowed. There are times when public

vengeance in the interests of the community may be allowed to pursue the miscreant, but such occasions are not contemplated in the text. Our Lord does not annul the law that punishment follows sin; he annotates it. Vengeance is his, not ours; he came not to abrogate the results of wrong doing, but to fulfill and illustrate its law.

3. Christ Came Not to Abrogate the Law of Love, but to Fulfill It

He summarized the Ten Commandments in two: and the two contain the ten. "The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely, this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." God's ancient people always had greater difficulty with the second of these commandments than with the first. Love to God came more easily to them than love to their neighbor. With this result—their God became a subjective God—for we are all apt to paint our own pictures of God. How often has God been the God of imagination rather than the God of revelation! And a subjective God becomes an exclusive God and an exclusive God is inevitably worshiped by an exclusive people. Exclusion

spells selfishness and a multitude of other sins that follow in the train. The Jews thought themselves a privileged people; other people were as small dust in the balance compared with them. Outsiders might share in the uncovenanted mercies: but only insiders could be God's guests in the house of banqueting. And then Jesus appeared, and he gradually trained them to a better state of mind. In the earlier stages of his ministry his words and works were all for his own people. It was only later, when "his own people received him not," that his messages bore the impress of their world-wide application. Israel was a privileged, an elect nation, called with a splendid calling, to house but not to monopolize the grace of God, that through this chosen race all men should receive the truth. Now, Jesus did not come to destroy the confidence which his countrymen had in their vocation; he did not deny their peculiar advantages; he did not deny, for instance, that God was their Father. What he did deny was that God was their Father to the exclusion of his other children. He emphasized the universal Fatherhood. He taught that God's care was for all his creatures; and he uttered that clarion call which is to-day heard in every clime and country—"God so loved the world." The world includes the Jews, but it includes also the Gentiles: "God so loved the world." It is the

gospel accompanied by a carillon of bells! How Jesus enlarged and glorified everything he touched! And so our Lord made the law greater than it ever was before. He himself obeyed it, and in obeying it fulfilled it. His voluntary sacrifice of himself upon the cross of Calvary was the tribute which he paid to the law. Sin cannot be smudged out as though it were of no consequence. It must be faced and fought and conquered. And Jesus, when he died for sin, sealed its doom. Sin is a long time in dying, I know, but it will assuredly die. God did not sacrifice his only Son for nothing. And if you will allow him he will kill sin in you. He shares your nature in order that he may share your inward struggles, and he shares your struggles in order that you may conquer in his name. Your salvation is in no manner of doubt if you will but trust him wholly. He has gone up on high on your account that sin may die in you. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

JOTS AND TITTLES

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."—*Matthew 5. 18.*

Our Lord chose the most emphatic words with which to introduce a great principle. There is nothing obscure in this statement. It is written as in letters of light upon the sky and is so emphasized that none may misunderstand its meaning. "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass"—"till the present cosmical system has ceased to exist," as Doctor Morrison has put it, the moral obligations of the law will abide. The day would come in the which the heavens would pass away with a great noise, and the elements would melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein should be burned up. But that day is not yet, and during the present order the law in its unimpaired entirety must be obeyed by those who name the name of Christ. By the "law" we understand the complete system of ethical morality contained in the Old Testament. It would seem as if this verse were specially constructed to enforce its obligations. Heaven and earth were regarded as essential to the Jewish Dispensation, and in turn that dispen-

sation was thought to be as everlasting as the universe itself. The jot was the "yod" in Hebrew, the smallest character of all, and the "tittle" was the point or bend by which one letter was distinguished from another. Literalists have perverted this saying of our Lord and have pointed out that afterward he modified the law. Yet all he did was to magnify it and make it honorable, and his words concerning his own mission are the answer to all literalists of every school. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." All that was permanent in the law Christ appropriated, and all he appropriated he elevated. The law of the Old Covenant was illumined by the law of the New, and the letter which killeth was transcended by the spirit which giveth life. The reign of love will never come to an end and therefore the jots and tittles of the imperialism of Jesus will never disappear.

1. The Importance of the Jots and Tittles

It is impossible to overestimate their importance to the law. The law, both ancient and modern, depends for its efficiency upon a wise observance of the jots and tittles. When the jots and tittles are removed, the law becomes nebulous, and no method of destroying it is more effectual than that of making uncertain its moral obliga-

tions. The underpinning of the law is done by jots and tittles: and it is the jots and tittles that give to it stability and strength. We hear much to-day about the extremes to which the pendulum is liable to swing. Liberty is the antithesis to bondage: and we hail the dawning of the day of liberty after an experience of the night of bondage. But what if liberty develop into license? And license declare itself in brutality and Bolshevism? Now, there have been those among us who have said, "We are under the law of the spirit and no longer under that of the letter." But that is not the teaching of the New Testament. "The letter killeth"—if it be nothing but the letter; but if the spirit breathes through the letter, it is no longer an instrument of death but of life. It is this grotesque and impossible literalism which bids fair for many to destroy the Christian revelation. Our liberty is the liberty to do right, to be severe and self-disciplined with ourselves, to observe the jots and tittles of the commandments of God. Then we shall know the truth and the truth shall make us free. It is a mistake to imagine that we can neglect the jots and tittles with impunity, and not be the worse for the neglect. There is a tendency to-day to think that men are better without these hampering restrictions; so we have to set them free for the life they have to live and the work to which

they feel that they are called. It is said that they achieve greater things for humanity and God under a broader sky, and with no boundaries to hem them in. Do they? Remove the jots and tittles from the discipline of school life, and where will your pupils be? Tell these boys that school begins at eight in the morning, but that there is no compulsion to be there so early, and that punctuality is left to the promptings of the individual, and what sort of a school would you have under such conditions? You would soon discover that your model boys and girls were communities of anarchists to whom the ethics of the law appealed in vain. You cannot leave the government of a community to be determined by those who are governed. The jots and tittles are essential if the commandments are to be carried through effectively. In the affairs of common life you cannot disregard the details. What about our homes when the jots and tittles are neglected? "We have our meals at all times here," said an overworked woman who was at the head of an exacting household, and it was easy to see from the general confusion which obtained that what she said was true. In every well-ordered house the jots and tittles are carefully attended to. It is wonderful how details help in the administration of the home. The same principle obtains in

(*a*) *The commercial world.*

Go into any of your great stores and shops and you will discover that every worker has his place, and that the program for each day is carried through with rigid regularity. It could not be otherwise. In smaller enterprises it may be possible to mitigate the discipline; and yet, where order is not enforced, there is rarely true success. The outstanding men in the business world to-day are prompt, punctual, and methodical. No doubt they have other qualities, and yet these greater gifts would be of no account unless they were supported by the lesser. John Howard, the prison philanthropist, accomplished a work the echoes of which were heard throughout the world, yet he addressed himself to his tasks with meticulous exactitude. "There was no fuss or hurry in his motions; he never lost a moment; he never gave a moment too little to the business in hand. Nothing escaped his eye and there was no spot into which he did not penetrate." The truth is that we never achieve anything that is worth the having without the surrender of our powers, which means the dedication to an ideal of all that we have and are. The men who win in this workaday world are those who observe its jots and tittles. The boy who can be relied upon is sure of promotion. He who can be trusted with the jots and tittles will not remain in obscurity for long. True merit is its own adver-

tisement. There is still room at the top of the ladder even for industrious mediocrity, and there is a great demand for it in the markets of the world. The same principle obtains in

(*b*) *Our domestic world.*

How much better life would be for most of us if we strove earnestly to make our homes centers of inspiration, fountains of blessing to every inmate! They might be such if we all "played the game." It is the jots and tittles that do so much toward the making of a happy home. The neglect of the amenities of life which cost so little and mean so much has in many cases reduced the home to a boarding house in which men and women gather to eat and sleep, but in which so often there is no community of faith or feeling.

Most people are easy to get on with if they know we care for them; when they feel otherwise the fine edge of their fellowship disappears and they take divergent courses. The story of John Milton's unhappy married life is too well known to be dwelt upon at length. Professor Dowden does not seem to think that the great man himself was faultless. Temperamental differences there must have been between him and his young Royalist wife; yet Dowden says, significantly: "The art of creating happiness, the most beautiful and the most difficult of the fine arts, Milton had not studied. His genius was

not fired by the ambition of evoking smiles from sadness." The jots and tittles seem little; they cost little, but they pay a mighty dividend. A flower awakens tender thoughts; a word of praise stimulates the desire for further excellence, and the knowledge that we are loved means more than we are willing to admit. We must not neglect at our own firesides that courtesy of speech and manner of which some of us are such past masters when we are on parade. We must reserve a little for home consumption. The man of good manners is an asset to the household. So too with women. They make a great mistake who do not endeavor to appear to the best advantage except at a reception or a dinner party. Women, do not keep all your fine dresses for state occasions! Your husband and children are pleased to see you at your best. The jots and tittles of attire mean more than you imagine to those who love you most. Slatternly wives do dishonor to vour homes. The same principle obtains in

(*c*) *The realm of personal character.*

It is the jots and tittles that ultimately determine our characters. A man of fine qualities is often defeated by one fault. He may have the ability of an archangel, but envy persisted in will undo him. Or he may be a wizard in the piling up of wealth, but if he is a miser he will not en-

joy it. How men fail through little faults! How even their reputations become obscured by some bad habit that has mastered them! A preacher of brilliant gifts lost the offer of one of the greatest pulpits in the land through wild and whirling talking before a preaching service; and untoward habits, which do not rise to the rank of offenses, have often prevented those who are conquered by them from getting where they might have been. It is so frequently the little things rather than the big ones that place men in positions of prominence and power; and it is the little things also that exclude them. I have known pulpit princes who have never risen above the rank of village congregations. They have been master minds, but the jots and tittles have been against them. Perhaps their delivery has been bad, or their articulation has been defective, or some personal habit has intervened between them and the best. And this is especially true of character. Men of gifts and graces, who for the most part would put many of us to shame, have nevertheless some dark spots in their hearts. They know their infirmity and yet they have not conquered it. The same principle obtains in

(*d*) *The church.*

The jots and tittles are factors in the church's life. It is the church that pays attention to the details which usually abound in all good things.

We cannot afford to be slack in our enterprises for God. Many in the past have criticized the church, and her critics to-day are legion. We are told, for instance, that the church is ineffective because she is overorganized, yet no church can be organized too well. The machinery cannot be too perfect if "the spirit of life" is "in the wheels." "We must get a preacher of commanding gifts for this pulpit, then the church will go of itself," remarked one a while ago concerning a leading Christian center. What can this mean but that the success of the church is to be determined by the gifts of one, while the members fold their arms and look on? What can this mean but the shifting on to one pair of shoulders of the corporate responsibility? The church is a co-operative movement, and the true success is possible only when members and ministers join hands in consecrated effort. All this talk about the responsibility of ministers needs to be seriously annotated. We have not ministers of brilliant gifts enough to man our leading pulpits, to say nothing of the pulpits which take no such rank. The work of the churches has for the most part been done by men who were not geniuses, but whose ordinary gifts have been transfigured by their industry and devotion. It is, therefore, important that the church in all departments should have the best of everything.

Her equipment should be carefully scrutinized in all its details. The ministers of many churches could furnish instances of strangers for whom a handshake has altered life's perspective. The cordiality of their welcome has led them to exclaim, "Thy people shall be my people." Even the janitor counts for much. "I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness;" and as Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "The man who is first in church and last out can do an immense amount of good or evil." The details of the church's machinery should often be reviewed, and no stone should be left unturned to accomplish that for which she stands.

I shall not expose myself to the charge of obscurantism, on the part of those who know me, if I say that the jots and tittles of

(*e*) *Theology* must not be disregarded. We welcome all scholarship and ask that the best learning of our time be brought to bear upon the Bible. The Christian revelation is continually receiving new light upon its problems; and he is no true friend to supernatural religion who maintains in theology a Rip Van Winkle attitude. But the jots and tittles are of paramount importance. It matters all the world whether Jesus is my Leader or my Lord. Jesus means much to me, but Jesus Christ means more. The addition

of the one word "Christ" introduces me into a new world which is crimson with sacrifice and atonement and the very blood of God.

2. The Passing of the Jots and Tittles

"Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

The text obviously contemplates a lengthened and lasting continuance of the moral and ceremonial law of Moses, and a corresponding continuance of its obligations upon Jewish believers. It is to endure, says our Lord, "till all be fulfilled"; that is, until the law with its jots and tittles shall be everywhere acclaimed and illustrated in the hearts and lives of men. Not yet have its moral implications been fully realized, and therefore they are as binding now as ever. The jots and tittles have in no wise passed from the law.

But have they not passed, or are they not in danger of passing from us? That is the question which I would have us all to face. The jots and tittles are of no account if we neglect them. They do not pass away, but what if we pass them by? There are ominous signs of such disregard among us. Many of us are treating with scorn the jots and tittles to which our fathers gave such heed. Restraint is odious to us and we have flung

its galling yoke from off our necks. Where is that punctilious reverence for the house of God which obtained even a generation ago? Where is that fine sense of honor in respect of the services of the sanctuary? We claim for ourselves liberty of thought and action, and demand that we shall no longer be in bondage to the letter of the law. But bondage is of the very essence of religion. You cannot be a Christian and be free. You are henceforth a soldier in Christ's army, and you are pledged to a crusade which has for its object the vanquishing of the powers of darkness and the victory of the crusaders. Religion is a compound of two Latin words and it means to fasten or to unite. Ours, then, is a bond of union, the blissful bondage of those who have joined hands in the campaign for Jesus Christ. You cannot escape the obligations of obedience; obedience is of the very essence of our order. "Obey something" is John Ruskin's exhortation, "and you will have a chance some day of finding out what is best to obey. But if you begin by obeying nothing, you will end by obeying Beelzebub and his seven friends."

The rejection of the religion of jots and tittles is patent on every side of us. We have laughed out of court the religion of which our fathers made so much, and as yet *we have found no adequate substitute for that which we have spurned.*

Political economy, to paraphrase a suggestion of Sir Henry Jones, has supplanted ethics, and life has been explained in terms of commerce and not in terms of character. We have removed the jots and tittles, and we have now substituted for the offensive term of Sabbath-breaking that of the larger liberty which a more enlightened age enjoys. In reality we have secularized the Sabbath, and we have covered with a more respectable phrase a process which is none the less deadly because it is demure. The time has come for the Anglo-Saxon world to cry "Halt!" and for the Christian world to examine herself so as to discover if she has still the right to hold the title deeds of that church which is the body of Christ. The terms of discipleship are the same as ever they were. His manifesto cannot be modified so as to meet the whims of his unworthy followers. To you, to me, the call is clear and clamant, and the imperative of Jesus rings through the centuries with unimpaired authority: "For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matthew 5. 20.*

THE association of the scribes and Pharisees on so many occasions is suggestive. The definite article used before the word "scribes" is not repeated before "Pharisees": and its omission seems to indicate that they were intimately related—which we know to have been the case. For the scribes in most essential things were Pharisees: and yet each class had characteristics which were peculiarly its own. In Luke's account of the feast in Levi's house the record reads, "The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples." The literal translation is "the scribes of the Pharisees"—a rendering which reminds us that the scribes were divided in their allegiance, some belonging to the Pharisees and others to the Sadducees. So here the scribes spoken of form a section of the Pharisees, and for the practical purpose of this sermon both scribes and Pharisees may be regarded as a unity.

It is well that we should get an accurate idea at the outset of what the scribes and Pharisees

stood for. There is just a danger lest we should not give them the credit to which they are entitled. There were points of excellence in their conduct which must not be overlooked. They put themselves to trouble in order to justify their title to a place among the religionists whose name they bore. They made long prayers and they deserve better things than condemnation at the hands of a generation which rarely prays at all. They gave much alms and their philanthropies put to shame not a few whose sanctity is never touched with a practical compassion for those less favored than themselves. They tithed mint and anise and cummin, it is true; and if modern Christians did a bit more tithing in the interests of the church, all our financial difficulties would vanish like a dream. They were exact in their religious calculations and accurate in their conformity to them. Pharisaism thus became a synonym for holiness and holiness in the Pharisee became another term for self-complacency; indeed, so self-complacent were the Pharisees that they held, if only two went to heaven, one would be a scribe and the other a Pharisee!

There were, however, traits in the conduct of the Pharisees which should not be underrated. They were far ahead of many a modern professor of religion. There is something that is quite praiseworthy in their punctilious devotion to duty.

And yet our Lord says to his followers for all time that their goodness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. It must be all that their goodness was and more. There must be an "extra" to it or else it would not avail. "Ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven;" in other words, "There will be no place for you in the invisible church which is composed of that community of believers who have been cleansed from all self-seeking, who have been purified and perfected by the Eternal Spirit."

We will not, then, allow ourselves in an undue depreciation of the Pharisees. It is only by realizing what they were that we can argue from them to ourselves. They had immense influence; they had won distinction among the people by their intellectual achievements, and they had given throughout the nation a fresh impetus to learning. They had stressed the importance of education so that Jewish parents sought to educate their children. They appreciated the importance of scholarship for the rising generation, and thus far they were real nation builders. Their love of learning was one of their most exemplary traits. But, as Mr. Claude D. Montefiore has pointed out, they and their disciples were "sometimes infected with a too acute religious self-consciousness. The combination of monotheism and nationalism prevented a true conception of the

relation of God and of Israel to the world beyond Israel's pale. The purest meaning of election, of service, and of sonship was obscured: it was only realized fitfully and partially, not completely, permanently and by all."

Yet they were passionate patriots. They studied the law; the son in the Jewish home that undertook that study was the flower of the flock. They did not take it up simply to pass university tests, or even that they might become experts in the administration of it. They studied it because it was the repository of the will of God and because it held the secret, as they thought, of his purposes concerning them. They knew they were a conquered people and their hope of restoration to primacy and power was in him. They came, therefore, to regard the law with an almost superstitious veneration. It was the herald of the Messianic hope: and love of the law secured for them, so they thought, the fulfillment of that hope. They were pious patriots.

It would take a much longer space of time than I can compass to say all that might be said in favor of the Pharisees. I have, however, said enough to show that they had a religion—a religion with many admirable phases and features—and yet the breach between Jesus and themselves gradually widened into a disastrous chasm. Jesus had no certificate from any of their schools. The

details for which they stood—a severe exactitude and a love of the letter of the law—were items which had no place in his scheme. Details were of small account to one who stood first of all for principles. When the Pharisees paraded their traditional ablutions, he boldly declared that "to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man." Why did he denounce the religion of hand-washing? Simply because it was a performance and nothing more. They had magnified hand-washing into a ritual, which to them ranked with prayers, and philanthropies and alms; and their posturings had made them proud. They gave themselves superior airs, and carried themselves as men deserving special recognition by reason of their righteousness. They lived in an atmosphere of unreality, and the most scorching invectives which Jesus ever uttered were spoken against them. Their parades and pageantries were an offense to him. "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." It would seem as if the reaction in our Lord occasioned by their conduct caused him to turn his back on ceremonial religion in favor of that which was entirely spiritual. It was not cleansed hands but cleansed hearts that he demanded. Religious ceremonial counted for nothing without the corresponding spiritual reality. But it is for you

and me to turn the searchlight upon ourselves rather than on the Pharisees, for the emphasis is on "your righteousness"— originally, of course, the righteousness of his immediate followers, but now the righteousness of all who name the name of Christ. In order to appreciate our personal duty let us discover what the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees stood for as opposed to the righteousness, or goodness, expected of ourselves.

1. It Opposed Ostentation to Honesty

The scribes were past-masters in the art of ostentation. No doubt they began with better things before them. Pure monotheism makes a magnificant appeal. But with them "one God" found its companion doctrine in one people. That they were a special people ordained with a specific end in view, and honored of God in their election to a great responsibility, is patent to us all. But they were ordained for service and chosen that they might bless and save the race. If they had only learned the lesson, thus early, that privilege spells responsibility, and that election means the service of humanity rather than a sort of superior isolation, how much better would it have been for them and the world in which they lived! But they kept themselves apart, and their exclusiveness stimulated a self-complacency which found

expression in a disregard for others. Thus more and more their national life became a theatrical display, their religious life an organized hypocrisy. The tree was umbrageous and showy but it bore no fruit. Like all ostentatious people they often made fiction do duty for fact, and they "delivered to the people a great many observances by tradition which are not written in the law of Moses." They thus foisted upon their fellow countrymen many burdens for which there was no essential authority. Yet, traditionalists of the first order though they were, they could set aside tradition, or at any rate could add to it, in order to accommodate themselves to exigencies that arose. They lifted their flag aloft, and to gain proselytes they compassed sea and land. They were the Jesuits of the Jewish Church. They stopped at nothing in order to gain their ends. They were intent on power and prominence, and they pressed into service the most unpromising material in order to attain them. Their arrogance became unbounded—they were "the people," the true Israel of God, and beside them there was none other. In every sphere of life they claimed to lead. They dominated the markets of the world; they aspired to be the aristocracy of learning. Hillel proclaimed the axiom of their intellectual insolence when he said: "The uneducated fears no sin, but he who acquires knowledge has

attained eternal life." So the oak spread itself while worms of destruction were eating at its root.

Would that we might learn this first lesson taught us by the Pharisees—that ostentation is an offense to God! For what is ostentation? It is vainglorious display, or, to use the simpler equivalent, pretense. No words that Jesus uttered were so terrible as those he spoke concerning professors who for a pretense made long prayers and at the same time devoured widows' houses. The scribes had translated the Old Testament with the ability and insight of the expert. Perhaps this very fact made Jesus more severe than otherwise he might have been. It is remarkable that though he was keenly alive to the sins of the Sadducees, he was less caustic in his criticism of them than of the Pharisees. Pharisaic hypocrisy stirred his indignation to its deepest depths. He could find no place within the wide circle of his catholic sympathies for men who were not honest. Those who did obeisance to the letter of the law and ignored the spirit were anathema to him. Let us then cultivate truth in the inward parts. Let us be honest in our approaches to God. We cannot long deceive ourselves. How much less can we deceive him! He sees through the semblance to the reality. He knows what we are and what we seem to be. Religion is nothing if it is not real, and there is no goodness that is not genuine.

2. It Opposed Formalism to Faith

And here I would call your attention to the wide distinction between form and formalism. It is necessary that here and now I should speak of it because form in religion is not opposed to faith, while formalism is as wide apart from it as the north pole is from the south. "Form" is another word for "order," and "order is heaven's first law." It is impossible for most people to worship without form. We are glad to have a well-ordered service to assist us in the worship which we seek to render. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is to very many of us a special means of grace. It is, in other words, the channel through which God imparts his strengthening presence in a real yet mystical sense to the soul of the communicant. It is a sacred reminder of his "exceeding love" and my "exceeding need." If it does not bring before me these two great facts in the life of the soul, and if it does not strengthen my fellowship with the saints who are my brothers and sisters in Christ, it fails entirely of its purpose. The sacrament is the ordained instrument for the renewing of my bond to Christ and to my fellow Christians. It stands for reconsecration and involves the fresh surrender of all my faculties to God. So, then, form is vitalized by faith. The two do not stand in opposition to each other;

they are united in the best and truest sense. And yet if I communicate because I have a vague impression that the sacrament insures me against the judgments of God, no matter what my life may be in coming days, then I am guilty of Pharisaic formalism. We must beware lest the form should degenerate into formalism.

It is impossible to build up a church without respect to form. The Salvation Army has done a great work for now half a century in every part of the world. Its program has been changed again and again to meet a changed demand. The emphasis which has lately been placed by many who name the name of Christ upon social service has more or less affected each section of the Christian Church. It is easy to criticize and to say what might have been, and I will not assume so ungenerous a task. And yet the Salvation Army, in the vast majority of places, no longer attracts the great crowds that at one time rallied to its public services: and I cannot but think that the impermanence of the movement is related to the absence from its services of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Forms help to fortify the man who has been converted from the error of his ways and who seeks to establish communion with his God. But neither Sacrament has of itself turned the wicked man from his wickedness, or saved a soul from death. I am

not disposed to disparage forms. I believe in their necessity while the world is constituted as it is. And as to formalism—well, even that is better than nothing! You had better go to church simply because your parents went than never go at all. Formalism is not the worst thing in the world: the worst thing is to be without God altogether and to have no desire for him. I believe that it is better to go to church of convention than to cut yourself off from the assembly of the saints. Faith is the hand which touches the hem of the Saviour's garment. It is "by grace" and "through faith" that we enter the inner circle.

3. It Opposed the Mechanical to the Spiritual

Pharisaism, both ancient and modern, rests in the letter of the law. It takes no risks; there is in it no adventure of faith. It shelters itself behind the walls of tradition; it has no outlook and no life. It is, spite of its affectations, really the religion of the mediocre man. The law was originally a mechanical device—"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"—and the like. It was a system of equations in which each side had to balance the other. There was no scope in it for forgiveness, magnanimity, mercy. And it was also awe-inspiring. Men feared to break it because they were afraid to incur the penalties

that followed. There was no looking to heaven for the shining light, no eager expectation of the stretching forth of the redeeming hand. There is no love in law. Its disciples are externalists; it kindles no fire upon the altar of the heart.

Now, religion is not a matter of mechanics but of dynamics. Professor A. B. Bruce has reminded us in one of his books how awfully possible it is for the evangelic creed to be divorced from the evangelic spirit, and what a tragedy it is when the "evangelical party" is no longer possessed of the passion which brought it into being. It is possible to forget our origin and ancestry. What was the original charter of Methodism? To save souls, and to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world. This is almost a verbal repetition of Wesley's own words. Is this our present watchword? Or have we lost the spirit that warrants us in using it? And the great Lutheran Church? Does it stand to-day where Luther stood?—the bulwark of aggressive Protestantism, the exponent of the doctrine of justification by faith on which Wesley preached one of his greatest sermons? Martin Luther and John Wesley have been bracketed together as the two outstanding evangelical reformers. Are their followers thus closely identified? Or have we drifted apart, each standing unconsciously for ideals which we have allowed to die?

A mechanical performance of duty begets in the performer a heedlessness which does not recognize itself. The soul cannot live in a machine and by and by it acts like an automaton. The mechanical man is like a revolving wheel, but "the spirit of life" is not "in the wheel." And so he is unconscious of the deterioration which inevitably sets in. "The Pharisee did not know he was a Pharisee," said Dr. J. B. Mozeley in his famous *University Sermons.* "The hypocrite does not know that he is a hypocrite. He cannot, upon the very basis of his character. He must think himself sincere; and the more he is in the shackles of his own character, the more sincere he must think himself. Hence, then, that great and conspicuous point of view in which the Pharisee always figures in the gospel, namely, as incapable of repentance. Self-knowledge is the first condition of repentance, and he did not possess self-knowledge: and therefore it was said to him, 'The publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of heaven before you!'—because the publicans and harlots knew their guilt and he did not."[1]

4. It Opposed Tradition to Experience

Enough has been said to demonstrate that the Pharisees were the slaves of tradition. This is the startling record concerning them: "Thus

[1] *University Sermons,* by J. B. Mozeley.

have ye made the commandments of God of none effect by your tradition." It is a terrible anti-climax. They had so multiplied their misinterpretations, they had so applied their evasive observations, that they had killed the oracles of God. Brothers, what are we doing to-day? We are divided into hostile camps as to the interpretation of the Word of God, and the extreme left and the extreme right have drawn their swords while a multitude are looking on in sorrow and amazement. Is there nothing in this book to bring Fundamentalists and Modernists together? Is not its spiritual message greater than any discovery made by either side? In the life of Sir William Robertson Nicoll there is this passage: "Nicoll was fundamentally the opposite of sectarian. Once when he heard religious men of a different school sharply criticized, he quietly quoted the words, 'He appeared unto them in another form.' "[1] May I quote to you who hold differing views as to the origin and authenticity of the Bible—but all of you sincere in your wish to own its incomparable supremacy—"He appeared unto them in another form"?

It was because Jesus would not be bound by their prepossessions and prejudices that they broke out into open hostility. Jesus would not

[1] *Life of W. R. Nicoll*, by T. H. Darlow. Reprinted by permission of George H. Doran Company, publishers.

have the law except with annotations of his own. "He came not to destroy, but to fulfill" it. He took the law of Moses, improved it and put it to nobler uses. So he made tradition a help and not a hindrance. His words over the incident of the hand-washing were epochal: and Delitzsch remarks that here he "turned his back upon the highway of rabbinical traditions and opened a path which till then had never occurred to any human heart." And yet he made rabbinical traditions his starting place and out of them he evolved an ethical wonderland such as men had never seen before.

And he expects you and me to go beyond tradition. It is ours not to destroy tradition, but to fulfill it. What are our traditions? For the most part better than we deserve. Have we received a great name, entered into the heritage of an illustrious ancestry? That is a help: but to fulfill a favoring tradition demands energy, self-sacrifice, and crucifixion of the flesh and spirit. We must carry it a point further. The family name must be enhanced by us. Are your antecedents unhelpful? Well, it may be that God has given to you in person what others have inherited. He is always supplementing our deficiencies in this way or in that. There are few real handicaps in life. Is our church specially indebted to the past? We must justify our traditions by present-day activity

and enterprise and service for the Master. Is religion a tradition in your home? A traditional faith cannot save you. You must have personal knowledge of unseen things—a vital experience of the grace of God in Jesus Christ your Lord. To know the word of God you must carry it in your heart: to know the grace of God you must experience it in your life.

"What we have felt and seen
With confidence we tell,
And publish to the sons of men
The signs infallible."